

# THANKS-LIVING

by Wenton A. Fyne

The beauty of nature always causes me to reflect on the sovereignty and majesty of God. Each season has been ordered to bring us pleasure and joy as we celebrate His creation. The cheerfulness and hope of fresh spring flowers, the graceful sun-filled days of summer, the exquisite colors of the leaves in fall, the purity and peace of a quiet winter's snowfall: all remind us that **there is so much to thank God for.**

My fellow ministers, what can we thank God for today? The psalmist exclaimed, "Oh! Give thanks unto the Lord for He is good and His mercies endure forever." Some days it's far too easy to let the activities of life distract us and keep us from truly worshipping Christ with thanksgiving and praise. Life without a thankful heart quickly becomes discouraging and gray. Here are some ways to help us celebrate every season with a heart attuned to "thanks-living."

- **Give thanks to the Lord for the joy of ministry by recognizing the Lord's blessings daily.** Having the opportunity to represent God to our brothers and sisters is a great privilege. Let's remember to gladly proclaim our thanks to God for this opportunity to serve Him by living each day with gratitude and joy.
- **Live each day with a spirit of expectancy.** Each day comes as a gift from God; something that we don't have to repay. As we face the challenges, disappointments, fears, loneliness, temptations, as well as the joys, happiness, and peace of each day, we can focus on the promise that *greater is He that is within us, than he that is in the world.* It's this kind of confidence in the Lord that will help us achieve a life of "thanks-living."
- **Keep our focus on Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith.** We need to remember to celebrate and give thanks in spite of our circumstances and experiences, choosing to stay connected to Christ moment by moment because true joy and satisfaction come from total dependence on Christ. Out of this dependence flows authentic ministry. We need to remember that true ministry does not come from our own ability but from God, and that it is an honor to be called to the service of "reconciliation"—reclaiming lost souls for Christ.
- **Keep exploring, learning, growing, and opening ourselves to new truths.** Allowing God to teach us something daily encourages, strengthens, and deepens our walk with Him. Wisdom from Him leads to an overflowing of love and joy from a thankful heart.

I'm a runner and I enjoy running early in the morning. It gives me a chance to say good morning to a new day. I especially look forward to hearing the birds sing their sweet songs. I love how free and happy and friendly and loveable they seem to be. Their presence and music give me a chance to see myself

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## THANKS-LIVING

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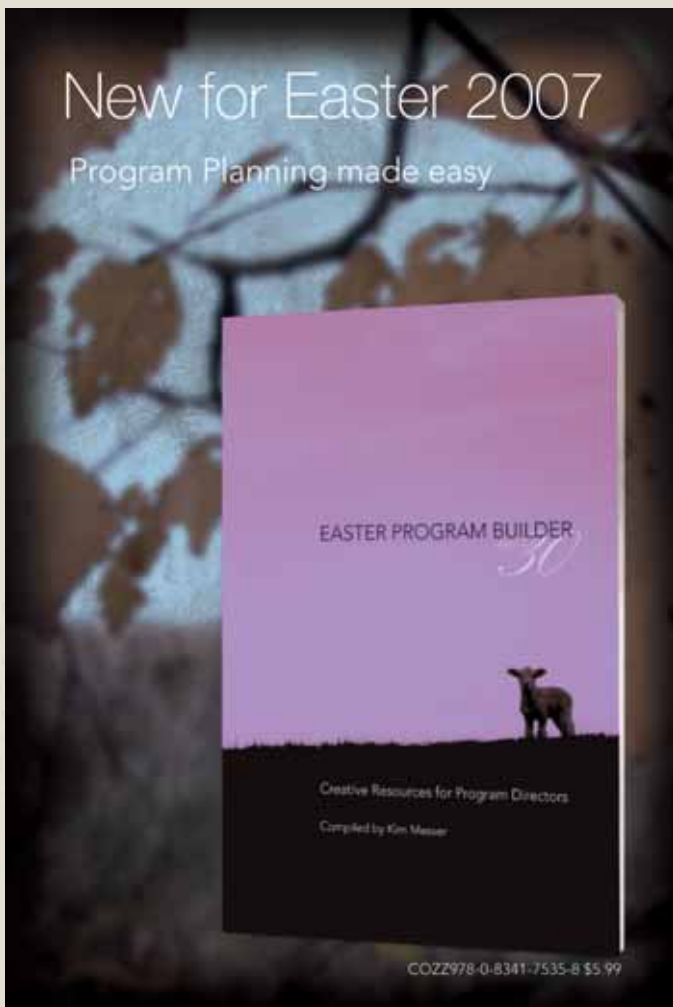
in new ways and to truly appreciate the gift of life and the treasure of freedom. These song-filled mornings help me greet each day with a thankful heart and a joyful spirit.

The hecticness of the holidays is upon us, and in the midst of all our duties and activities, celebrations and festivities, it's easy to get distracted from the majesty and glory of God that is displayed all around us. So whether it's the twinkling lights on your neighbor's roof or the purple haze of twilight reflected in the winter snow, take a moment every day to connect with your Creator. Let's remember to let the blessings of our world color our lives with hopefulness and joy. And let's strive to make 2007 not just a year of thanksgiving but also a year of thanks-living. What a wonderful year it will be!



— Wenton A. Fyne, Senior Pastor  
Beulah Church of the Nazarene  
Brooklyn, New York

For more reflection on the seasons...  
*Seasons of Prayer*  
COZZ978-0-8341-1871-3 \$15.99



**TRINITY CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA  
BLAIR SPINDLE, PASTOR OF YOUTH AND  
FAMILY MINISTRIES

So often in youth ministry we do what we do and hope that someone will lend validation to our efforts. At least this is how it was for me. I'd find myself thinking, *maybe if my youth group grew large enough someone would notice or if I was a megachurch youth pastor then I'd surely get the recognition I deserve.* A lot of my time was spent thinking about what lay in the shadows. The best thing about my ministry today is that I'm no longer preoccupied with looking too far down the road or waiting for what's beyond the crest of the next hill. I've learned to enjoy the moment.

The students I work with aren't overly impressed with me. They don't worship the ground I walk on. This authenticity allows us to move *together* to a higher life with Christ. Together we struggle, laugh, and cry. And we've learned to really listen. As a community we're far from perfect in our interactions and programming, but I think we're finally starting to understand the "we" word—and it's bigger than it sounds.

The thing I've come to realize is that really connecting with students is not magically accomplished through some special program. There's no mathematical equation for successful youth ministry. Real growth occurs when you are willing to accept who you are in Christ—to recognize your strengths and weaknesses—and to not be afraid to let your student see who you really are. Being real with those you serve opens the door for them to really let you know who they are so you can grow together as you travel on this Kingdom journey.

I'd like to encourage those of you who we're like me—caught in the flurry of programs and focused on the future—to stop constantly wondering what next big thing will come your way. Instead, look around you and rest in your calling. Allow the lives of those you serve to impact you in deep and meaningful ways. I'm so thankful that God has taught me how to live in the here and now in authentic community with the youth and families I serve. It's enough for me now. I hope you too can say the same.

For more on improving your youth ministry...  
*Worship-Centered Youth Ministry*  
COZZ978-0-8341-1826-3 \$14.99



# How's that Wor in' for ya?



**WASHINGTON PACIFIC DISTRICT**  
EDMONDS, WASHINGTON  
TERRY KETCHUM, DIRECTOR OF CHURCH RESOURCES

**WHAT:** *Healthy Church Development*

**WHY:** Recent census studies indicate that the percentage of nonreligious people in Washington is the highest of any state. This awareness led our district leaders to discuss the need to resource our churches so we can effectively impact the lives of people inside and outside our churches. We recognize that church health and development is about more than cosmetic alterations. It includes understanding the need for significant ministry in the Northwest and beyond.

**HOW:** Resourcing for healthy church development requires collaborating, sharing, interacting, supporting, discovering, processing, and overcoming. Laypersons and ministers on our district have developed this missional initiative to resource churches by helping to encourage and cultivate:

- Christ-like leaders—through personal spiritual formation
- Strategic networks—which are based on specific needs of pastors and churches
- A missional vision—through implementing the Great Commission/Great Commandment strategies in local churches
- Continual renewal—through prayer, children/youth emphases and structural improvements

**RESULT:** Since launching the church health missional initiative at this year's district assembly, we have seen some positive results among WaPac Nazarenes. As assessments and training are incorporated into board meetings, board retreats, and local church seminars, there is a growing awareness of what it means for the body of Christ to be healthy. Additionally, need-based leadership networks provide opportunities for fellowship and personal growth. There is also an increased freedom among district pastors to mentor and be mentored, to seek help and give help, and to equip and be equipped.

We understand that healthy church development requires ongoing commitment and dedication, and most of all we recognize that. . . "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

(For more on the WAPAC District church health missional initiative contact Terry at [terry@wapacdists.org](mailto:terry@wapacdists.org) or 360-357-0794.)

Improving Your



## Youth Ministry



**Contemplative Youth Ministry**  
*Practicing the Presence of God*  
Mark Yaconelli  
COZZ978-0-3102-6777-5  
\$21.99, Zondervan Publishing  
This book discusses how to use silence, covenant community, and other activities for your youth ministry. It helps your students recognize God in their everyday lives. Filled with different kinds of youth ministry ideas from the past, it provides rich encouragement and insight for addressing the challenges that have called you to lead.



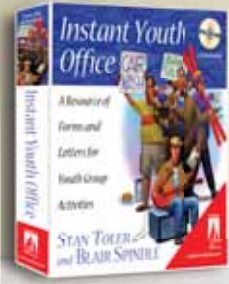
## A Way with Words. . .

"What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life. Jesus asks, 'Do you love me?' We ask, 'Can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in your Kingdom?' ...We have been tempted to replace love with power."

—Henri Nouwen, *Mornings with Henri J. M. Nouwen*

## Corny Pastor Joke

- Q. What do snowmen eat for breakfast?  
A. Frosted flakes.
- Q. How do sheep in Mexico say "Merry Christmas?"  
A. Fleece Navidad.
- Q. What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus?  
A. Claustrophobic.
- Q. What are Santa's helpers called?  
A. Subordinate Clauses.



### Instant Youth Office

*A Resource of Forms and Letters for Youth Group Activities*

Stan Toler and Blair Spindle

COZZ978-0-8341-2205-5

\$89.99, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004

This efficient and easy-to-use resource gives youth workers everything they need to organize activities such as mission trips, small group gatherings, annual youth budgets, and much more. It includes hardcopy examples of all the forms and letters you'll need as you plan and coordinate your activities. It also comes with an electronic (CD) version of everything so you can easily customize any form to fit the needs of your youth group. Every youth pastor and youth worker should consider using this helpful, time-saving resource.



### A Perfect Life

*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*

Bo Cassell

COZZ978-0-8341-5007-2

\$8.99, Barefoot Ministries®, 2005

This updated version of John Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* examines the doctrine of Christian perfection but in language that youth can relate to and understand. It includes a free downloadable leader's guide (available at [barefootministries.com](http://barefootministries.com)) and makes a great resource for personal devotions or small groups.



### The Godbearing Life

*The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*

COZZ978-0-8358-0858-3

\$15.00, Abingdon Press, 1998

This is a great book that focuses on tending to the soul care of the youth minister. Its end chapter questions and exercises offer valuable accountability reminders to ensure that your motives and objectives are pure and sincere. It's a great book to read and discuss with other peer youth ministers and workers.

### Youth Ministry

Jesus

Publishing House, 2006

to create meaningful communities, and contemplative group in order to help the presence of Jesus in ed with honest stories of ministries both present and ouragement and relevant e needs of the youth God

## Emergent Conversations

This cross-denominational discussion has become one of the most popular topics for blogs and message boards, receiving either criticism from those who embrace the past and present or praise from those who see a need to reexamine our church structure in order to meet the needs of our changing society. Last October, emergent conversationalists gathered at Nazarene Theological Seminary and those people with others will meet for further discussion at the M7 Conference ([www.m7conference.org](http://www.m7conference.org)) in Kansas City, February 19-21. Regardless of where you stand on this issue, the emerging church discussion will continue for many years to come.

## Christian Business Owners

While the market for religious products (hit movies, popular music, biblical hero action figures, etc.) is expected to top \$8.6 billion in annual sales by 2008, Christian owned entrepreneurial businesses are on the rise as well. Instead of a generic expression of faith exhibited through products, etc., small business owners are choosing to use their offices and factories as a way to live out their beliefs and impact the customers they serve. Balancing workplace laws with the teachings of Jesus, they sincerely want a workplace that reflects their deepest values. There are already over 30 Christian networking associations that reflect this mission. It's a great trend to consider as you disciple and guide the Christian entrepreneurs in your church.

([CNNMoney.com](http://CNNMoney.com), *FORTUNE Small Business*, "Jesus Inc.," Richard McGill Murphy, Feb. 3, 2006)

STATISTICS,  
SOUNDBITES,  
and Suggestions

## Top 6 Best Sellers of 2006 from Beacon Hill Press

**#1 *The Power to Be Free***  
by Frank Moore

**#2 *Too Much Stuff***  
by Kathryn Porter

**#3 *Answers for Chicken Little***  
by Dan Boone

**#4 *I Love God's Sense of Humor; I Just  
Wish He'd Let Me in on the Joke***  
by Stan Toler

**#5 *Think on These Things***  
by John Maxwell

**#6 *Broken Children, Grown-Up Pain***  
by Paul Hegstrom

"Anyone who befriends young people knows they're people of spirit—people drawn to song, dance, story, and silence. We cannot hope to touch the hearts of youth if we have lost our own spiritual rooting."

—Mark Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry*,  
Youth Specialties, 2006, p. 20.

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## M7 Spiritual Formation Retreat

A 24-hour **Directed Retreat** will be conducted from Sunday, February 18th through Monday, February 19th for M7 conference attendees desiring to deepen their spirituality. The retreat costs \$75 and will be led by Doug Hardy (NTS) and Alden Sproull (Southern California). For details, registration, or to download a brochure, visit [www.nts.edu](http://www.nts.edu).

HE'S WAITING.



rendezvous



[www.faithfriends.org](http://www.faithfriends.org) —Des Moines, IA  
Faith Church of the Nazarene

This site reflects the mosaic of people who comprise this congregation and it is very user-friendly. It's definitely worth viewing.

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.htm>—Northwest Nazarene University Wesley Center Online

This is an INCREDIBLE resource for pastors, youth pastors, Sunday School teachers, and everyone who is seeking a better understanding of our Wesleyan heritage.

[www.lillenasconference.com](http://www.lillenasconference.com) —This is the host site for the Lillenas Music and Drama Conference being held in Olathe, Kansas, February 8-10, which is open to everyone interested in creative worship arts training. This site contains registration, workshop information, and more.

*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

[Isaiah 9:6 NKJV.]

[communicator@nph.com](mailto:communicator@nph.com)

### A Word from *Matt*



"Next." As North Americans we are hardwired to live in anticipation of what is next. We're constantly asking what is next in politics, with my family, with my career, or with my church. We are in a perpetual state of "next." Teenagers especially tend to focus on the future. They ask "next" based questions such as, "When can I drive? When can I date? When can I get a job? When can I move out?" One goal I'd like to suggest for you to consider as you approach a new year is to strive to help the youth of your church reflect on the Christ of yesterday and today in a deep and contemplative fashion, so they will be ready for the "next" of their lives.

The "Improving Your Bookshelf" resources this month are designed to help you with this goal as you teach your youth to practice the presence of God—the God who always was, is, and will be.

All of us at Nazarene Publishing House would like to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year. Grace and peace to you as you celebrate the love and joy of Christ's birth this holiday season.

— **Matthew S. Zimmer, Editor, Church Resources Manager**  
Nazarene Publishing House

## Communicator features. . .

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BOX 419527, KANSAS CITY, MO 64141-6527

STOCK NUMBER	ITEM	RETAIL PRICE	PASTOR'S DISCOUNT PRICE
COZZ978-0-3102-6777-5	Contemplative Youth Ministry*	\$21.99	\$17.59
COZZ978-0-8341-7535-8	Easter Program Builder No. 30	\$5.99	\$4.79
COZZ978-0-8358-0858-3	The Godbearing Life*	\$15.00	\$12.00
COZZ978-0-8341-2205-5	Instant Youth Office*	\$89.99	\$71.99
COZZ978-0-8341-5007-2	A Perfect Life*	\$8.99	\$7.19
COZZ978-0-8341-1871-3	Seasons of Prayer*	\$15.99	\$12.79
COZZVBS-2007	Tumbleweed Gulch	\$79.99	N/A
COZZ978-0-8341-1826-3	Worship-Centered Youth Ministry*	\$14.99	\$11.99



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