

BELIEFS *Values*

Youth ministers craft handbook for spiritual growth

BY RENA FULKA

SPECIAL WRITER

As they teamed to build a youth ministry at St. Anastasia Roman Catholic Church, Mark Springer and Cheryl Smith moved beyond the realm of programming and into a lifestyle that offers a sense of God's presence.

The foundation for their dynamic ministry is illustrated by their experiences in a newly released book entitled, "The Seven Principles of Effective Youth Ministry, a Handbook for Spiritual Growth."

"The book is a model that invites people to share the experiences of God through community. It's all-encompassing. It's encouraging a lifestyle. What we're trying to do is say yes to the youth ministry model of relating to the world using these seven principles."

At St. Anastasia, youth are encouraged to explore and recreate the church through a relational youth ministry that involves drama, skits, writing, poetry and retreats in a warm and welcoming setting.

"We have a sense that we draw people and teens in because we have a different slant on enhancing, empowering and affirming them," said Springer, a full-time youth minister and deacon.

"Then they go out to do it for others, living the best life they can and following Christ." It was during his seminary studies and more than 20 years of working with youth in three Oakland County churches that Springer came upon the seven lifestyle principles described in the book. But it wasn't until he began his ministry at St. Anastasia

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six years ago that Springer began to bring the principles into focus.

"When Cheryl joined the program, each principle became more clarified," said Springer, who was inspired by his associate. "Cheryl embellishes the principles. She lives them and says yes to them."

Once they partnered in 1986, Springer and Smith began to build off each other to expand their hands-on ministry using the seven principles of hospitality, experiential learning, creativity, empowering leaders, self-esteem spiritually, celebrating ritual and making myth, and advancing the setting.

But it wasn't a book on youth ministry that the pair set out to write three years ago. Their original intention was to co-author a resource handbook on the sacrament of Confirmation.

"We soon realized that there had to be a foundation to understand where we were coming from," said Smith, a former elementary school teacher. "We decided to do this first to get a framework. Any kind of ministry can be built from this framework."

The seventh of 10 children in a devout Catholic family, Springer married his wife, Paula, 18 years

ago and translated his priestly calling to youth ministry and the deaconate. The Farmington Hills couple have four children: Mark, II, Eric, Megan and Alexander.

Springer attended St. Gregory Seminary in Cincinnati and earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and social sciences from Maryknoll College in Chicago. He completed his master's degree in theology from the University of Detroit, his Master's of Divinity degree from St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, and was ordained a deacon in 1980.

"I have a great deal of enthusiasm," said Springer, who served St. Columban in Farmington Hills and Our Lady of Sorrows in Farmington before coming to Troy. "I love ministry. It's a part of me. It's who I am."

As a resident of Troy, Smith served St. Anastasia on the worship commission, the family life committee and as director of the altar servers. But she found herself drawn in a new direction when her children, Scott and Stacie, became teens.

"I saw my kids get excited about youth ministry for the first time. And as I began to get involved, I found it to be the most alive place in the church," recalled Smith, who found her niche in the Confirmation program.

"Cheryl fit in real quickly with her talents and gifts, her organizational ability and her personality," added Springer.

Now residents of Clarkston, Smith and her husband, Bob, have continued their active membership at St. Anastasia Church, 4571 John R.

"I had an availability that seemed to meet a need," said Smith. "An availability that turned into a vocation."

"The Seven Principles of Effective Youth Ministry, a Handbook for Spiritual Growth" is the first published book for each of the co-authors — Springer, who only joked of writing a book, and Smith, who realized a long-time dream.

When the pair needed assistance in organizing and pitching the book to publishers, they turned to Ray Maloney, who teaches classes on book marketing at The Community House in Birmingham.

"I wanted to assist them in writing a book for an audience that is my first love, which is young people," said Maloney, a Royal Oak free-lancer in communications. "They give you their entire program as they do it. It's shaped by adult leaders and by kids. Every page of that book is about kids."

Himself an author of three published books, Maloney is the founding head master of Kensington Academy in Bloomfield Township, where he worked for 15 years. Maloney also founded the Self Esteem Center in Birmingham and served as its director for 13 years before dissolving the company just months ago.

"Mark always had a real sense of where youth is coming from. The teens are very, very involved and so are the parents," said Maloney, a former high school teacher. "Cheryl came out of the community as a volunteer to the youth program. What a terrific team. I've never seen that combination do a program like this before."

Maloney's help seemed to be a godsend to Springer and Smith, whose book was immediately picked up by Resource Publications of California.

"The book feels more spiritual-



JIM HENDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ly led for us," said Smith, an English major. "Things just seemed to fall into place. We had that synchronicity."

Readers, said Springer, "will be motivated, energized, receive hope, learn alternatives and know that the church can be fun."

In a society that stresses competition, success agendas and materialism, Smith says the great challenge in working with teens is their sense that their spirituality is counter-cultural.

"We teach them how to be welcoming, nurturing, forgiving, empowering, healing and caring," added Springer. "We discover God together."

"The Seven Principles of Effective Youth Ministry, a Handbook for Spiritual Growth" can be purchased at G. A. Fuchs Co., 30739 John R., just south of 14 Mile in Madison Heights, or by calling the toll-free number, 1 (800) 824-7601.

COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features spiritual announcements involving Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric, 605 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

FARMINGTON HILLS CHURCH OF GOD

The winter schedule for Farmington Hills Church of God, 25717 Power Road, between 10 Mile and 11 Mile roads, includes Sunday School for all ages at 10 a.m. and the Morning Worship Service at 11 a.m. For more information, call 477-9144.

NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

North Congregational Church, 36520 12 Mile Road west of Drake, has Sunday services at 10:30 a.m. Sunday school and many other activities are also available to further faith and fellowship. For more information, call 848-1750.

NORTH FARMINGTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

North Farmington Community Church, 32500 W. 13 Mile, between Farmington and Orchard Lake roads, has services at 10 a.m. every Sunday. Religious education for children sixth grade and younger, as well as nursery care, are provided during services. Various activities and small group meetings are held during the week. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call 628-6900.

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. John Lutheran Church, 23225 Gill Road, has worship services with holy communion at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. every Sunday. Sunday school classes are available for people beginning at age 3 to adult and they meet at 9:40 a.m. A supervised nursery is provided during worship and Sunday school. A play group for parents and their preschool children meets at 10 a.m. Wednesdays. Call 474-0684 for more information.

NORTHWEST BAPTIST CHURCH

Northwest Baptist Church of Farmington Hills announces the start of Pioneer Clubs for boys and girls four years old through the ninth grade. Pioneer Clubs meet 7-8 p.m. each Wednesday at the church.

At Pioneer Clubs, children develop socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually through a variety of skill-building activities. Club members also develop Christian values and learn to apply the Bible to everyday life.

For more information, call 474-3393.

FAITH COVENANT CHURCH

Faith Covenant Church, at the corner of Drake and 14 Mile Road in Farmington Hills, is sponsoring Faith's Fun and Fitness program featuring exercise, fellowship, crafts and speakers. Upcoming topics include: crisis pregnancies, great family vacation getaways, spring fashion show and much more. Baby-sitting is available. The program is from 9:30-11:15 a.m. Thursdays.

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Trinity Episcopal Church, 26880 LaMura Drive off of 11 Mile Road between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt, services are at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on Sunday. Nursery care is available at the late service. All are welcome. For more information, call 474-2860.

OAKLAND HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH

Oakland Hills Community Church meets in the chapel of William Tyndale College, 35700 W. 12 Mile, one block east of Drake, Farmington Hills. Sunday worship begins at 11 a.m. Nursery care is provided. Sunday school for ages 3 to adult is at 10 a.m. For more information, call 478-6001.

CHARISMATIC PRAYER

A charismatic prayer group meets at 8 p.m. Sundays in Patio Classroom 1 on the ground floor of the University Center at Madonna

University, Schoolcraft and Levan. For more information, call Shawn at (313) 464-9057 or Julie at (313) 464-4566.


A group also meets at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays for Scripture and singing at St. Edith Church, 15089 Newburgh, Livonia. The group meets in the church meeting room. (Use rear entrance 2.)

Call Sandy at (313) 462-2243 for more information.

CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR
Church of Our Saviour, Presbyterian (USA), 6555 Middlebelt, conducts 10 a.m. Sunday services.

Church school classes for infants through high school and crib care are available during worship.

For more information, call (810) 625-7606.



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Holiday donation will help provide toys, clothes to kids

For the third year, Research Data Analysis Inc., Bloomfield Hills, will make a difference this season by "adopting" an Oakland County kindergarten class and a local family through the Light-house Program of Oakland County.

Working with the non-profit agency, RDA, will provide new clothes, toys, books, games, personal items, food and gift certificates.

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