

# CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

*Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church*

January 2026



## Celebrate.... You Earned It | Steve Pausch

The world around us is finding many things to celebrate... we just celebrated the New Year, College football will celebrate a Champion, school kids will celebrate snow days, and NFL fans will celebrate their Champion. As we look back and forward here at Youth For Christ, we want you to join us in celebrating what God is doing. You have prayed for this ministry and generously given of your resources to make it possible for us to be in front of teens almost every day of the week. Our teams of adult leaders give of their time to get to know young people, listen to them share in the ups and downs, and introduce them to who Jesus is and how they can get to know them.

Recently, at a meeting just before Christmas, I was at a table with a group of students eating dinner and asking questions, simple questions, I thought. Not one of the 8 students at my table could answer these Christmas related questions: Where was Jesus born? What is a manger? Who was the earthly father of Jesus? Who brought gifts to Jesus?

However, one young man was very proud to name Santa's reindeer, explain that Christmas is really not a church celebration, tell us that the Christmas tree is a symbol of those who worship the earth and not God. The rest of the time at the table I shared the meaning of Christmas and why it is important. It seemed like the teens at that table had never heard the story before. It is amazing to me that each has a phone with access to all the information of the world in the palm of their hand, but they didn't know the real story of Christmas.

So, what's to celebrate when a bunch of teens don't know about Christmas? We get to tell them and help them see that they were created by God and they have a special purpose. In a world that often times seems to devalue them, we get to show the their worth.

And you are right there with us as we share with teens. Your prayers and support help

us get into their lives and share Christ.

My prayer for 2026 is this: God send us more young people who do not know you and give us the words to share with them so that we can celebrate what you are doing in their lives. Amen.

## Y<sup>2</sup> | Matt Mountjoy

There is a very exciting development for Garage Ministries in the Wadsworth YFC. One of the challenges of modern teen culture is they just aren't out of their homes much, because they live their lives and interact on screens. It is our goal to meet and build Christ sharing relationships with as many students as we can. The best way to do this is to go where the kids are. When The Garage was founded, and for many years after, downtown was where the kids hung out. They wandered around town, hung out in the library, skated in parks. So having a spot in the middle of town has been a blessing, and it continues to be for much of our ministry. But we noticed, for Thursday nights, it was getting harder and harder to meet new kids and have consistency of getting kids out of their homes once they were there. So we began to look into where are kids still hanging out at? How can we go to where they are at? This is how we came to our new relationship with the Wadsworth YMCA. Since their building is attached to the high school and right next to the junior high, many students go there immediately after school. Kids who are members go in, and there are a handful of non-members that hang out in the lobby. The Y has been gracious enough to give us a room where we can have meetings, and not only that but allow us to bring in kids that aren't members of the Y as long as they remain with us throughout the event. So, we have officially launched YFC Campus Life at the Y, immediately after school on Thursdays.

Our other ministries, including the teen parents group and the Wednesday Night Garage, will continue to go on at our facility as always. Also, beginning in February once a month, we will be taking the Thursday after school group down to The Garage as well. This will give us opportunity to do some of our more messy games or special events at our own location. As we enter our Christmas break, we are excited about this new program. We have met 25 new students and had 28 total kids at our last meeting! It was awesome to get to share The Gospel and the story of the Birth of Christ with so many new students, many of them having shared with us they had never before heard it! We are so grateful for this new opportunity. Please pray for the ministry as this program grows, and pray for all of the students involved!

## Why We Do What We Do | Laurie Beal

If you are part of ministry at all, you are probably familiar with the phrase, "that's why we do what we do." You've said it yourself or have heard others say it when something happens that matches your goals, or mission statement, or your heart for the cause you are serving in.

When what we are doing makes a visible, positive difference in some way... that phrase pops in our head, readily, as a reminder to keep going. Additionally, we sometimes even say it sarcastically when something doesn't exactly turn out how we were hoping. And sometimes in a dry period where we haven't seen much fruit, we search for and acknowledge something small to explain why we continue plugging away. Our experience tells us the small things are the big things. And we remind ourselves of that.

We also, of course, acknowledge that we are doing what we are doing because God has led us to it and that HE gives us the strength and energy to pursue the mission. We are answering the commandments to love God and love others.

So to wrap up 2025 and head into 2026, here are three stories from the end of the year that are examples that prompted us to proclaim "that's why we do what we do"...and examples of why YOUR support is worth it!

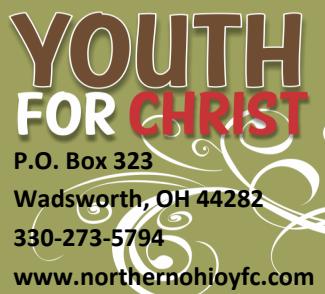
1. Our teen parents group was gathered eating at the counter in our cafe. Our conversation covered all kinds of topics and then it settled in on one particular theme. The young moms and one young dad in attendance all started sharing hard things that happened to them as they were growing up. They shared ugly things that were said to them...and done to them. They shared of times they had felt no hope. They talked of ways their parents or others in their life had made them feel. Our mentors listened, reminded them of their true worth and then started asking how they were going to change it up to ensure THEIR kids didn't endure the same hardships. The mood shifted and the conversation lit up with empowerment and excitement about change and reminders of God's purpose and plan for each of their lives. One gal ended the night saying she didn't know what they'd do without the group and how she always feels encouraged when she leaves.

2. We had dozens of teens come to shop and get free dresses and suits for their homecoming and winter formals dances over the last few months. One gal in particular stands out. She had decided last minute to attend the dance, and her mom brought her to shop. I took them downstairs and started showing them where the dresses were and mom said that her daughter was getting a suit because the young gal didn't think any dresses would fit her or that she'd like how they looked. I showed her the suits and ties and added that she may also want to try a few dresses on just to see how a fancy dress would look on her since she'd never tried any on. A bit later the duo came up to find me. They were both smiling and the gal was carrying a dress bag. She was excited to show me her choices and said she had found TWO dresses that fit perfectly and that she LOVED!

3. The last example occurred at our second week of having our Thursday group at the

YMCA vs. having it at The Garage. We had a large crew and all of us mentors were marveling at how kids kept pouring into our new Campus Life program. We ultimately had THIRTY teens show up for week 2! That definitely made it worth lugging all the supplies from the Garage to our cars, into the Y, back to the cars and back to the Garage after. But that big number, 30, wasn't what stood out enough to prompt the phrase. It was the number 1. Matt shared the Christmas story with the kids and shared the HOPE that JESUS brought into the world for all of us. Then Matt asked if there was anyone there that had never heard of this Good News before. ONE kid raised his hand.

THAT is why we do what we do. Thank you to ALL who help us do what we do. All glory to GOD!



Steve Pausch  
Executive Director  
  
Laurie Beal  
Director of Ministry-  
Wadsworth  
  
Barb Pfeiffer  
Office Manager

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