

Church Office

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Meeting location

Marshall Middle School
25 S. Pontiac, Janesville

Pastor:

John Swanson

*Declaring the greatness of God and serving
others for joy and His honor (II Cor. 4:5)*



July 1, 1999

Dear Friend,

A few weeks ago I happened to see the last 15 minutes of the TV news magazine called "48 Hours". Dan Rather (anchor of CBS Evening News) is the host of the show. This particular show was about the shootings at Columbine High School. At the end of the show Mr. Rather asked this question, "How will we keep these things from happening? What is the answer?" He continued by saying this, "The research conclusively shows that children who have a close relationship with their parents or another significant adult are far less likely to engage in these sorts of acts of violence.

Mark DeVries, in his book, "Family Based Youth Ministry" after surveying the frightening statistics of teen despair, says this, "Without a doubt, no single factor is entirely responsible for the frightening situation faced by our teenagers. But I believe a single trend in our culture has, more than any other factor, precipitated the crisis. Until we take that trend seriously, our ministry to young people will be severely limited in its impact."

He then notes a recent study of how teens spend their time that was published in the book, "Being Adolescent". He says, "The single most disturbing conclusion...was the unprecedented neglect of teenagers by adults...Teenagers are isolated from the adult world. And even when young people are 'with' adults, it is usually in a large group setting in which the teenagers are being entertained, informed or directed by those adults, leaving little opportunity for the dialogue and collaboration required for youth to learn adult values."

I desire and pray that my children and every child that God brings to our church become an adult that is a passionate lover of Christ. Five facts convince me that the best way for that to occur is through...

- ◆ a church that intentionally brings adults and youth/children together in the life of the church
- ◆ a church that motivates and equips parents to fulfill their God ordained role in their children's lives.

These facts are:

1. The isolation of children and youth from parents and other adults in our culture,
2. Parents for good or for evil, are the greatest influence in our lives
3. The biblical command that parents are to teach their children the gospel (Deut. 6: 6-9, Eph. 6:4)
4. The biblical pattern of the church as an age-integrated, intergenerational fellowship (Neh 8: 2-3, 12:43, II Chron. 20:13, Mark 10: 13-16, Eph. 5:21-6:9, I Tim. 5: 1-2)
5. The historical fact that intentionally age-segregated churches did not exist until the early 1900's

I look forward to the day when the majority of parents in our congregation are reading the Bible and praying with their children several times each week. When they are intentionally discussing biblical truth with their children, not as a legalistic, religious duty but because they delight to talk about the God who has made us and who saves us in Christ. I look forward to the day when every teenager in our church can say they have at least

one adult friend in our church and when every adult can say they have a teenage friend. When groups of adults and youth study God's word together and serve Christ together and have fun together.

We have begun to work towards that day but there is much yet to do. Here is what we are currently doing to move towards this vision:

- ◆ Faith Training Seminar. This 6 hour seminar gives the biblical vision and practical instruction for parents to train their children in the faith. **THE NEXT ONE IS JULY 30-31.** (See the enclosed brochure)
- ◆ Discovery Groups. These are intergenerational small groups of 10 to 15 people ages 13 and up.
- ◆ Regular, church wide, age-integrated parties and outings
- ◆ Church library and resource table with a plethora (That's a fun word that means "many, an abundance") of resources for parents and children
- ◆ Welcoming our children into worship with us on Sunday's.
- ◆ The children's sermon.

There is so much more that we can do to help each other train our children and help our fellowship reflect the God-honoring, age-integrated vision of the Scriptures. It is going to take all of us working together to reach this vision of a church that turns children into God-intoxicated adults. I am so eager to have you join with me in this great work of discipling our children. If you are interested in being a part of a group of adults and teens that plan and implement the things we will do to fulfill this vision please talk with me.

Working with you for your joy,