

Salt & Light Youth Ministry
Annual Report 2009

This has been an encouraging year! God is working in us to be learners, and from what we are learning, to be children of God who love Jesus and are motivated to live a conspicuous, kingdom way of life! We have met some challenges because of God's blessings. As a youth ministry we are learning how to rely on each other to keep things going and continue to invest well in our teens. God is challenging us to live within community, and He's inspiring a vision in us to work toward seeing our youth ministry blaze a trail toward living in Missional Communities in order to reach the world around us with the transforming power of the cross!

Birth, loss & cancer make Jesus glorious. As the body of Christ at Windham Baptist, we have all experienced to varying degrees how God is working in our midst this year. God has knit our body together ever more tightly because of the challenges some of our families have experienced, and the blessings as well. Tracy, Mark, Kaitlyn and little Mark have learned much of what it's like to be challenged with cancer; Josh and Heidi also shared candidly with us as they relied on the steadfastness of Christ through the loss of a baby; and new babies are everywhere (including Josh & Heidi expecting again)! Many of our fellow worshippers and a good chunk of our youth staff have been learning to be parents this year! All of these challenges and blessings have been ways through which our youth ministry has been able to learn that Jesus empowers us to rely on the grace of God in the midst of trials! Seeing them as opportunities to love all the Jesus is for us! We have not been reluctant to share the pain of sickness and loss with our teens. We have talked about what it means to live as family and share these burdens with one another, praying and encouraging each other through them. Coupled with the challenges of new parenthood, God has used these things to pull us together and continue to invest heartily in our ministry to our teens. These challenges in and of themselves have given us that opportunity. Jesus is shining through all of this, and our souls have found their rest in Him!

The story of God has been shaping how we understand who we are! We spent a large portion of our year going through The Story of God- approximately 22 stories that tell how God has been working through history to the climax of the person and work of Jesus on the cross. We have been impressed to see how devoted God is to family, and pouring his grace out upon those who rebel against Him. We have seen that we fit into this story of glorious redemption. We have learned that we are the church, the kingdom of God on earth, and ruled and loved by Him. We bring the kingdom with us wherever we go! We are infinitely blessed to have unending access to the immeasurable well-spring of the glory of God in Jesus! This motivates us to live like kingdom- people, declaring the wonders of the mercy of our King!

Our vision this year has been enriched greatly from years past. Because of all the things we've been learning we understand the importance of being a community within a community. At fall retreat we were challenged by God's words to his people through Jeremiah "...seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...". We want to see our youth ministry impact the communities we represent. Our teens are well-placed where their families live and where they go to school, to work diligently for the good of the community they live in. We want to see God work through us to serve and bless those around us through work projects, and being generous to those in need, investing time, money and even our homes, all toward the goal of making Jesus beautiful to the ones we come in contact with. We seek to use the resources we've been given to bring others into the light that helps them see Jesus for who he really is! It's not easy, but it's necessary. The truth is that it's a fight we must join, even if it kills us!

We know that we're people in need of change, helping others in need of change. We trust Jesus together to provide us with the transforming power of the Gospel. This means that a teen as well as an adult can be an instrument, used by God in the life of another, to help them adore Jesus and smash their idols at the foot of the cross! "The good news that gives life is the good news that transforms, while the community that incarnates the gospel truth for the sinner is the community that incarnates gospel truth for the saint" (Total Church, p.112).

As we press forward we pray that God will help us to understand more deeply how the truth of the gospel transforms us and gives us a hope and rest in Jesus that motivates us to live radically cross-centered, counter-cultural, kingdom proclaiming, mercy saturated lives! We trust the work that God is doing in us, to change the very will that drives us (Phil. 2:13) so that we may live on this mission and not waver.