

Youthful Vision

Teens Fill Gaps in Ministry at CC Parker, CO

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“God, please speak through Pastor Jason in his sermon today,” prayed 10-year-old Joe Steiner. “Open people’s hearts to learn about You, and we ask You to protect the soldiers in Iraq ...” As Joe’s prayer continued, 14-year-old Alison Fox was thinking her own thoughts while agreeing in prayer. “I was amazed,” said Alison, a Sunday school teacher’s assistant at CC Parker, CO. “He prayed for things most kids wouldn’t think of. ... I love being with the young children. When they think of things I never have, it’s such an eye-opener. Other times, it’s just fun cutting things out and coloring. I get to be a kid again, but I’m also an authority and an example.”

Blessings in Disguise

Youth like Alison became involved in ministries when the church faced a dilemma in its early days eight years ago: “We didn’t have enough adult volunteers to handle all of the work of the ministry,” said Pastor Jason Van Divier. “So we had to train up the children. ... What happened out of necessity became a huge blessing.” Today, nearly every teenager serves in the children’s ministry, a worship band, or both.

Of the church’s teen vocalists and musicians, “Their hearts are ready,” said Jason. “We don’t let them sing just because they want to. They have to be committed to Christ and understand that participating means they’re leaders.” CC Parker has no Sunday school past eighth grade. “During the service, high school students either serve in younger kids’ classes or listen to the Bible teaching with the adults,” Jason explained. “Our youth do have fun—every Sunday they’re outside after church, tossing a ball and getting muddy. But we’ve also learned that if we teach them God’s Word, model godliness at home, and pray for them, they won’t need to be entertained at church; they’ll have hearts for God.”

CC Parker’s Wednesday night youth meetings are for middle and high school students together. “Instead of the older kids avoiding the younger ones, we help them realize they can minister to them,” said Jason. “We periodically sit down with the older youth and challenge them to take this perspective.”



Cathy Van Divier, center right, prays with other women after a Sunday morning service. The CC Parker women’s ministry has been growing and impacting throughout the congregation as women have been drawing closer to the Lord through His Word, prayer, and intimate fellowship.



The church holds weekly worship services in a high school theater and regularly welcomes visitors who stop in after sports events.



After worship, usher Jim Dozler jokes with his 8-year-old grandson Jacob.



Alison Fox, 14, assists in the children’s ministry. She is one of several youth who serve faithfully in the fellowship.



Pastor Jason Van Divier, right, converses with George Panagos and his 8-year-old son, Evan. Jason believes the church's small size is not an obstacle to bearing fruit for Christ.

Without a building of its own, CC Parker meets in a school. "I couldn't wait to leave high school, and now the Lord has had me back in it for eight years," Jason joked. "But not having a building gives us opportunities to minister." Sports competitions such as volleyball, basketball, or wrestling tournaments are frequently held in the school's basement gymnasium while the fellowship is worshipping on Sunday mornings. Church youth used to go downstairs and pass out tracts; when the school district ordered them to stop giving literature to others using the facility, they transitioned to donuts and coffee. Jason said these events sometimes bring 1,000 people into the building—and each time, some attend worship or come by the book table to ask for more information. "School custodians have come to church," he added, "and some teachers leave



One of CC Parker's worship bands leads the church in song. As in the children's ministry, many youth serve in the band; Jason's son Jesse, 15, plays keyboard, left.



Jason prays with Stephen Veal after a Sunday morning worship service.

prayer requests on their whiteboards for our Tuesday night prayer meetings."

Power in a Small Package

The Van Diviers planted CC Parker in 2002 with only six adults. The fellowship quickly grew to 20, then 50, then plateaued around 80. "God can do a lot with a little," said Jason, who was trained for ministry at CC Costa Mesa, CA, in the early 1990s. "We'd love to see the church grow, but God doesn't need that. On my cell phone, I have a picture of a likely location of the spring where Gideon's army was narrowed down in Judges 7. He started with 32,000 soldiers—that's 4-to-1 odds against an enemy of 135,000. Then the Lord took Gideon's army down to 10,000; then 300—that's 450-to-1. We don't need a lot of people to do the work God gives us."

It is God's Word, not a large congregation, that produces spiritual fruit and influences the world, Jason said. "I love CC Costa Mesa's phrase, 'Simply teaching the Bible simply,'" he added. "It's easy to get distracted by the Internet, twitter, and webcasting. These things aren't bad, and we use some of them at CC Parker. But we focus on the Word. We want to keep it simple in a complicated age." In Paul's day, too, Christians faced temptation to lean on man's power instead of God's, Jason said—but Paul warned: "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

Rich and Stacy Curry and their three children were drawn to CC Parker two years



Children's ministry goes to 8th grade; older kids attend the main service.

ago by the Bible teaching. Rich first heard Jason on the radio, and when the family visited, "The teaching was terrific, and the fellowship was too," Rich said. "It's not a large body, but it's the body of Christ—people living with Jesus in them. We were welcomed warmly, genuinely." Today, Stacy leads the book table ministry and Rich teaches middle school students. Before coming to the church, "I didn't think teaching was my gifting," recalled Rich. "But there was a shortage, and I felt the Lord led me to fill in." Rich has taught the youth to share their faith, and many teens now seek opportunities to tell people in the community about Christ and His grace.

Dave and Doris Smith came to CC Parker three years ago after avoiding church for decades. Growing up, both had observed hypocrisy that hardened them against the Lord. Dave was using drugs and the Smiths' marriage was close to collapsing when, in 2007, Dave visited his family and his niece invited him to CC Roseville, CA. That morning, "God grabbed me," Dave said. "When we got home, my relatives found CC Parker on the Internet." Dave began attending the church and growing spiritually; he loved the emphasis on studying the entire Bible. At first, "Doris was hesitant," he said. "But after watching God change me, she accepted Christ." Dave now helps the sound crew, serves in the children's ministry, and reads any book about Jesus he can find at CC Parker's book table. "I need to mature as a Christian; I have a lot of learning to do," he said. "I'm not a baby, but I'm not a teenager yet. That's exciting." 🙌

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