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Articles

Are Sports Sabotaging Faith in America?

By Kevin Van Wyk

It's been clear over the past few years, ok decades, that youth sports are replacing church involvement. Young families are facing difficult decisions about church attendance, and many church members are viewing sports as a threat, an assault on our faith and to the future of the local church.

Certainly, the vast majority of North American churches are in decline. Many, like Alto, are stable and see just enough growth to offset the decrease in attendance of those who once were consistent weekly attenders. At the same time, we all see the ever increasing influence of youth sports and the increased demands placed on players and their families.

Sure, if you play baseball you can simply attend games or practice twice a week, but if you want to get in the game more, you'll tack on the Wednesday night practice. And then the traveling team coach calls... "it's just a few extra practices and some weekend tournaments for the best of the best." How can you pass up such a great opportunity? College is only 10 years away and this could be the key to a chance at a full-ride scholarship.

Ruth Moon explains, "Whether or not organized sports are Public Enemy No. 1 for churches, they still represent a symbolic challenge: how to engage members in a changing culture." (Game Changer: Pastors Blame Kids' Sports for Attendance Dips: Would embracing organized youth sports help?, RUTH MOON, AUGUST 27, 2013)

When Rod Tucker spoke with our Equipping Teams and other church discipleship leaders back in March, we did a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. One of the greatest threats articulated was youth sports. Rod challenged us to consider how we could move this from a threat to an opportunity.

That's a profound shift in thinking. If sports are a threat, we must fight the trend and seek to restore what was. If sports are an opportunity, we must find new ways to engage our members and reach the community through this trend. Efforts to return to the past have pitted the church against the non-church attenders and young families trying to do what they see is best. This certainly does not help us reach the world with the love of Christ.

Back to my starting questions... "Are sports sabotaging the faith in America?" If we honestly consider this question, we must acknowledge blaming cultural trends is not particularly helpful. We can't even blame the coaches, organizations, or parents. It's a trend that reveals our cultures deep longing for joy... to see kids succeed, to escape stress, and to hope in a better future. If faith can thrive under a culture of persecution, then faith can thrive under a culture of sports.

In the coming weeks, we will be teaching on ways we can make sports an opportunity for discipleship and outreach. I do hope you will join us for the series, and if you're gone to a game, you can always catch us on Facebook Live or consider watching some of these videos on RightNow Media (Signup for a free account at <https://www.altoreformedchurch.org/resources.html>.)

- Torchlighters: Eric Liddell Story (Great for kids)
- Eric Liddell: Champion Of Conviction (great documentary)
- Dare to Be Uncommon (Sports Team Track) with Tony Dungy (each video could be split into three separate family/team devotionals)
- Average Joe: Game Plan For Life (for High school and up)

- Baseball and Leadership (a professional baseball manger shares)

For the moment, I simply want you to evaluate your view of youth sports. Consider these questions...

- What good things come from our youth sports?
- How can we help young families discuss priorities without being judgmental?
- What is it that makes a ballgame more appealing than a worship service?
- How might families and the church use sports to develop Christ-like leaders?
- What could the church do to share the love of Christ in a sports-saturated world?

Bible Class Memory Work

By Adrea Daane

We want to celebrate the hard work of our Bible Class kids that successfully memorized their year-long memory work this year!

1st Grade - Lord's Prayer

Jenna Bresser
Brinley Bruins
Madelynn Daane
Jenica DeJager
Christa Novak
Mac Pluim
Emerson Umentum

2nd Grade - 10 Commandments

Laney Arndt
River Block
Blake Bruins
Brady Buwalda
Rhett Derksen
Jaxson Peters
Brielle Redeker
Victoria Shotsky
Klayton Vande Zande

3rd Grade - Psalm 23

Isabella Benson
Brayden Daane
Owen Kloosterboer

4th Grade - Books of the Old Testament

Kendyl Plum

5th Grade - Books of the New Testament

Sawyer Bruins

Leah Buwalda

Lily De Vries

6th Grade - Joshua 1:6-9

Lucas Bresser

Charlie Flier

Stella Harmsen

Blayne Kloosterboer

7th Grade - Apostle's Creed

Ashlan Bruins

Charlise Bruins

Rylan Bruins

Hannah Derksen

Kaylee Flegner

Casey Flier

Garret Glewen

Oliver Glewen

Kylie Schultz

Elyssa Van Wyk

Equipping Youth Update

By Jessa Ter Beest

It's crazy to think summer is already here! What a great 2018-2019 school year it has been! Here are just a few things to celebrate from youth ministry this past year:

- Blayne Kloosterboer gave his life to Christ at our Lake Waubesa Spring Retreat!
- Ruth Brewer, Easton Hull, Elyssa VanWyk, Rylan and Ashlan Bruins, Casey Flier, Hannah Derksen, Oliver Glewen, Garret Glewen, Stella Harmsen, Charlie Flier, Lucas Bresser, Blayne Kloosterboer, and Ava Bille all read at least 10 chapters or daily devotionals and shared about them during second semester which earned them a trip to Noah's Ark!
- All of our middle schoolers who attended Lake Waubesa Spring Retreat read all 21 chapters of John over the 3 days we were there!

- Zack VanWyk and Libbi Campbell also took on the challenge to read the book of John in 1 week - great job!
- A handful of our high school students who attended the winter retreat at Silverbirch rededicated their lives to Christ - it was an awesome moment!
- Blake Dobbratz, Samm Respalje, Libbi Campbell, and Steven Anderson all shared their testimonies during the year - God is using them to reach their peers!
- We all learned more about what God's Rescue plan is throughout the Bible as a whole, and are continuing to learn and put into practice what it means to be Rescuers for Him!
- More info about our 2019 Graduates will follow in the August Amen.

Thank you all for your support over the year! Please be praying for our Memphis Mission Trip leaving June 16th at 6am!

Golden Lifers Update

By Julie Medema

Do you ever think about time? How sometimes it seems to go so slowly and sometimes it so quickly passes? When you're stirring something on the stove, 15 minutes seems like forever, but when you're reading a good book, 15 minutes is here and gone!

We're all very conscious of time, but most often it slips right past. Long ago, the poet Hodgson wrote:

"Time, you old gypsy man,

Will you not stay.

Put up your caravan

Just for one day?"

But it doesn't stay, does it! It just marches on!

God's time is not like our time. "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by..." but the Bible tells us that to everything there is a season, and God has promised that "as long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." And now spring has finally come (we think), if winter will just let go!

Psalm 46 gives such comfort and assurance. On days that seem dark, when the daily news seems so foreboding, sit for a time, read Psalm 46, be still and know that God is God! I hope you'll remember that He is our refuge and our strength! As Golden Lifers, that is our prayer for all of you.

MESSAGES

We wish to thank everyone that expressed condolences, sent prayers, food, gifts and cards in the recent loss of our Mother, Elaine Huizenga. They are much appreciated. We were able to send a donation to the Alzheimer's Association in her name with the monetary gifts you so generously gave. Dwaine and I are so privileged to have such a wonderful church family. Thank you so much. Dwaine and Cathy Vande Berg

We were amazed at and so thankful for your prayers and cards and other encouragement during Carl's two surgeries this past month. The quilt from the women's ministries was used daily for many weeks so was a real blessing. We thank God for you. Carl and Mary Vander Kooi

EVENTS

Foster Care Awareness Event - June 2 at 11am.
Learn how you can support local foster families.

Summer Celebration - June 23 at 5-7pm at Medema Fields. Bring your friends, family, and neighbors!

NEWS

Births

Marshall Douglas, son of Ken & Sam Daun, born on May 4.

Missionary News

Hello Partners,
I hope you are doing well! As you know, I returned to the states at the end of September of last year. I

was planning to stay in the states for a short fundraising cycle and then return to India to help with the training and transition. Unfortunately, I was not able to do that and will not be returning at this time. My heart is still there but right now I am following the Lord's leading to become healthy in all areas.

Words cannot describe how thankful I am for all of you, for your prayers, support, and encouragement. It has taken time, lots of prayer and counsel to come to this decision. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Once again, thank you for your support.

Blessings,
Erika

2019 ARC Teams

<p align="center">2019 Executive Committee</p> <p align="center">Kevin Van Wyk, Pastor Larry Mulder, Vice President Paul Bruins, Clerk</p>				<p align="center">Cory Kok, Chair of Deacons Jason Vande Zande, General Treasurer Ned Derksen, Benevolent Treasurer</p>	
<p align="center">2019 Elders</p> <p>Paul Bruins, 2019 Steve Daane, 2019 Larry Mulder, 2019 Randy Bruins, 2020 Scott Van De List, 2020</p>		<p align="center">Mark Zeatlow, 2020 Jack De Jager, 2021 Reuben Hopp, 2021 Gary Navis, 2021</p>		<p align="center">2019 Deacons</p> <p>Joel Buwalda, 2019 Jason Mulder, 2019 Matt Schultz, 2019 Ned Derksen, 2020 Matt Pluim, 2020</p>	
<p align="center">2019 Ministry Team Members</p>					
Worship Ministry Team	Equipping Children & Families Team	Equipping Youth Team	Equipping Adults Team	Care Ministry Team	Facilities Team
Kevin Van Wyk, Team Leader Jack De Jager, Elder Chad Loomans, Deacon Marcene Bruins	Adrea Daane, Team Leader Randy Bruins, Elder Joel Bruins, Deacon Jenny Benson	Jessa Ter Beest, Team Leader Randy Bruins, Elder Joel Bruins, Deacon Erin Brewer	Doug Shotsky, Team Leader Randy Bruins, Elder Joel Bruins, Deacon Cody Mueller	Kevin Van Wyk, Team Leader Doug Shotsky, Elder Reuben Hopp, Elder Gary Navis, Elder	Joel Buwalda, Deacon Jason Mulder, Deacon Matt Pluim, Deacon
Tonya Bruins	Carrie Bruins	Larry Brewer	Linda Mulder	Scott Van De List, Elder	
Henriet Jurjens	Lisa Flier	Jordan De Jager	Marlaina Shotsky	Mark Zeatlow, Elder	
Phil Loomans	Nursery Committee	Bridgette Flier	Outreach Team	Hospitality Team	
Katie Mueller	Adrea Daane, Team Leader Tiffany Arndt	Carissa Harmsen	Doug Shotsky, Team Leader Steve Daane, Elder	Bridget Lammers, Team Leader Stephany Buwalda	
Beth Ann Redeker	Stephany Buwalda	Bob Kloosterboer	Matt Schultz, Deacon Bridget Lammers	Melene Kraemer	
Rick Stelsel	Jen Foch	Keith Loomans	Tyler Loomans	Shepherds	
Megan VandeZande	Carissa Harmsen	Miley Ter Beest	Jessa Ter Beest	Ann Boerson	
	Desarae Hull		Rachel Zeatlow	Judy Bossenbroek	
	Laura Leonard			Betty Daane	
	Julia Meinke			Larry Daane	
	Sheila Schultz			Kathy Flier	
	Sarah Zeatlow			Carol Jansma	
				Keith Loomans	
				Jerry Medema	
				Gloria Mulder	
				Barb Pluim	
				Bob Pluim	
				Karen Cunningham	
				Marlene Navis	
				Marlaina Shotsky	
				Angel Smit	
				Stephanie Van Wyk	

