

PUBLICLY SPEAKING

The newsletter of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship

E-mail: lecture@thebol.com

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LECTURES FOR YOUTH

Questions Answered

Question: My branch wants to sponsor a youth lecture. How do we begin planning?

Answer: There is no one way to plan a youth lecture. But, you do have a built in resource — your Sunday School students and young branch members and attendees. Talk with them, include them on your lecture committees, and let them lead the way. Let inspiration guide you and your youth lecture will be your branch's individual, shining, and unselfed expression of love for youthful thinkers in your branch and community. Any member of the Board of Lectureship can give a youth lecture. There are seven lecturers who only speak to youth audiences.

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Here are some details to get you going. Also included is a first-hand account of how one branch sponsored a lecture for youth.

Start by checking out www.tmcyouth.com – On this website you can: access information about today's youth and Christian Science, connect with other youthful thinkers, and explore ideas of interest on the discussion boards. For sure, this will get your thought and plans moving!

Explore how young people are thinking about church and church membership.
<http://tmcyouth.com/church-resources/>

Find out what the youth in the world are talking about: healing; Sunday School; their communities and more. <http://www.tmcyouth.com/forums/forumdisplay>

Listen to the newest podcast series just launched at TMCYouth.com in October at:
www.time4thinkers.com

What are podcast lectures? <http://tmcyouth.com/podcasts/>

Many of these lectures are sponsored by the Christian Science Board of Directors and delivered at youth events and camps. The Youth Summit lectures are recorded live and later posted as podcasts on TMCYouth.com. These are lectures sponsored by local branches for the youth attending the Summits. Scheduling an airing of one of these lectures does not constitute sponsoring a lecture because they have already been sponsored events. The majority of podcast lectures are in English.

These lectures were written specifically for today's youth. Each podcast provides an opportunity to listen to the lecture's content and the lecturer. This preview might help your lecture committee decide what topic and lecturer would be a good fit for your branch family

and community. The lectures are available in two formats — podcasts (audio files to listen to online or to download onto your computer or MP3 player) and audio recordings of lectures presented at Youth Summits.

Lectures at Spiritual Activist Summits for Youth

<http://tmcyouth.com/media/category/summit-media/>.

Branches in a specific region may express a desire to join together with The Mother Church and TMCYouth and host a Youth Summit. Once the team is formed, they work together to decide the location, logistics, lecturers, lectures, and other events that will be provided. Summits can happen anywhere in the world. This summer there were African Summits sponsored by The Mother Church in the Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria.

Most recent was a Youth Summit in Chicago, Illinois, USA. There were 8 lectures (sponsored by local branches) for attendees to choose from. Here are some comments about the lectures from those attending.

- "Now I know how to help heal my friends and family."
- "Very inspiring. It made healing very real and possible to all."
- "The lecturer gave many helpful suggestions and answered many questions I had been struggling with."
- "My perceptions about body image have been spiritually uplifted."
- "It was so refreshing to have an honest open talk about the real man and woman."
- "The lecture provided me with guidance that will help me for the rest of my life."

If your branch is interested in information about sponsoring a Spiritual Activist Summit in your area, contact tmcyouth@christianscience.com for more information.

Youth-conceived, youth-led lecture

First Church Wilton, Connecticut, USA sponsored a lecture for local youth. Here is the account of this lecture in the lecture chair's own words.

"Food for Thought". That was the title of our church's first-ever youth-conceived, youth-led lecture. It was the atmosphere of Love felt at this church that led my then-12 year old son and me to join this church. And he wasn't the first Sunday School student to do so, either. We immediately began our work on various committees. Last spring, we joined the Lecture Committee, I as its chairman and he as a now-16 year old high school senior with a new idea.

By way of background, our Sunday School is an extremely vital place. In a church with fewer than 20 members, our high school class has eight students who attend regularly and are all students at our local public high school. It occurred to my son how grateful he was for this class and for the fact that he would see his classmates in the hallways at school and at various social events around town. We started talking about this in our Lecture Committee and it became clear to us that there may be many Sunday School students who are virtually the only Christian Scientists in their high schools. What if we held a lecture whose purpose was to bring together Christian Science high school students in the area to share ideas and give them some feeling of fellowship with one another?

Our other church members liked the idea of a youth-organized and youth-run lecture. We were off and running, but our first hurdle was how to construct this event as a lecture

without inviting the general public. After much prayerful work and discussion, one of our committee members offered her home for an evening of fun for the kids, complete with swimming pool, tennis court, big field for Frisbee tossing and no neighbors close enough to hear the inevitable loud music.

We had the idea and the venue – now to find a lecturer who was a) available and b) open to this rather unusual idea of ‘lecture’. Again, prayerful listening led us to Susie Rynerson, a member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship and the Sunday School liaison for TMC Youth. There was no question that the one Divine Mind was at work as she not only agreed that this fit the definition of a lecture, but asked that the kids tell her what they wanted her to talk about and in what format. Her watchword was ‘be flexible’ in our thoughts and planning and, as it turned out, the actual event itself.

So, my son got to work recruiting Sunday School students from a couple of neighboring churches to help him connect with other students in a roughly 50-mile radius. One of the first things that the planning committee did was to agree on a name for the event: “Food for Thought”.

Topics for discussion included:

- Is Christian Science ‘normal’? Do you feel like you’re alone as a young Christian Scientist?
- Is it difficult dealing with peer pressures of drinking, relationships, etc.?
- What is the role of ‘church’ in our daily lives?
- What is life about anyway?

Then, they got to work. Over the summer, we sent out a flyer and introductory cover letter to about 15 area Sunday School superintendents advertising a ‘parent-free night of food, Frisbee, swimming, tennis, great music and discussion’ with our lecturer. A small group of the students also visited area Sunday Schools to extend the invitation in person. This was part of the inspiration of the planning committee and contributed significantly to the success of the evening. A special invitation was sent out via Facebook (a social networking website). Our lecturer also has her own Facebook page – a real ‘plus’ in the eyes of our planners. I cannot begin to relate all of the blessings that flowed from this process.

As a metaphysical group, we continued working with the idea of the one divine Mind guiding and unfolding this planning process and it was borne out in every contact we made. We had several conference calls with the lecturer in which we shared our progress and she further refined the substance of the talk she was working on for us. When we had our church lecture preparation meeting by phone with Susie Rynerson, she shared her inspiration that we see all of these students as children of one God, one Mind, as children of ‘the light’ who are ‘not conformed to this world.’ We needed to cherish ‘youth and youthfulness’ in our work, that it was not confined or defined by age or circumstances. She reminded us that participants would be drawn to the event because they wanted to be embraced, and that they would feel that embrace in thought even if they did not show up for the actual event.

When the night came at last for our lecture (titled “Getting out of the box (and into a good place)”, we had over 20 kids confirmed, the food purchased, and a terrific sound system and music ready to go by the pool. - Then came Hurricane Hannah. Though the weather forecast threatened to derail an entire summer’s work, we all knew that divine Love is truly irresistible and that there could be no tempest in the realm of divine Mind. The rains came, but so did the kids – 20 of them in all. Everyone arrived without incident, including our lecturer who drove down from Boston. The party moved indoors – 20 kids, a lecturer; with

the few adults sequestered in the kitchen doing the cooking and wishing they could hear what was going on! Even a tornado siren (something I've never heard in my 30+ years in this area) couldn't prevent the unencumbered flow of divinely inspired ideas. I might add that the hurricane came and went and not a leaf fluttered! I was continually reminded of the 'still small voice of Truth' speaking through the roar of the storm.

What did the kids discuss? I had to substitute teach our high school Sunday School class to find out! Ms. Rynerson's talk (and remarkably they wanted her to give her entire lecture) focused on 'living outside the box' – Christian Scientists cannot be stereotyped into a single type of person if God is reflected in infinite ways. The kids also posed and responded to one another's questions with examples from their own lives and came to realize that perhaps they had been judging others and failing to see what they really have in common with their non-Christian Science peers. They related healings and examples of Christian Science in their lives. Perhaps they weren't so different from their peers after all.

Our first youth-conceived, youth-run lecture was a success. On their way out, all of the kids said that they'll definitely attend the next one of these evenings. They were energized and felt that they had really connected with each other. Though just about all of them were the only Christian Science students in their high schools, they left knowing that not only are they not alone in their faith, but they have the tools to let their light shine in a world of non-Christian Scientists. This evening not only blessed them, but will certainly leaven the thought of those with whom they interact back at home.

Our church and our Sunday School students are so grateful to Susie Rynerson, TMC Youth, and the Christian Science Board of Lectureship for their support of our 'outside the box' concept of a Christian Science lecture for our own high school students. There is, indeed, no 'box'.

E-mail Shannon Hodgins, the BoL lecturer consultant, at lecture@thebol.com to ask any questions that arise as you move your way through planning your youth lecture.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you have general lecture questions, you can always e-mail us in your language at lecture@thebol.com, or, if you speak English, call the Board of Lectureship office at The Mother Church. Our number is +1-617-450-3669.

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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