



LOVEMUSTACT

Partnerships for Sustainable Education

*"Love Must Act as light must shine and fire must burn."
-Fr. James Otis Sargent Huntington, OHC*

What Makes Young Adults Different These Days?



I remember driving along the highway in front of my grandparent's home many years ago. It must have been about 50 years ago. I was a teenager. My grandparents would have been in their mid-70s, not that far off from where I am now.

I do not remember what brought it up, but something caused my grandmother to remark on how much people had changed during their lifetimes, and I'm pretty sure she didn't mean for the good. "People are meaner these days," I think she said, and for some reason, I think she might have been referring to teenagers. Maybe it was a

warning. I didn't think that could possibly be right.

Now that I'm closer to her age then, I find myself wondering if she wasn't right. Things seem to be going downhill, at least a lot of things. Violent crime seems up. Abuse seems up. Uncaring behavior seems up. People just seem to me meaner than they did 50 years ago. Just as she perceived it, it seems more prevalent among the younger generations than it did to me when I was a teenager.

All that leads me to wonder about young adults, a time in my own life, I must confess, I barely remember. And as a bishop in the church, I find myself wondering, as so many church leaders of my age do, where they all went. Why aren't they in church? What is wrong with them?

Membership in the Episcopal Church has declined 43.2% in the last ten years; attendance, 21.1%, down to about 373,000 today. Ten years ago, 10% of our membership were young adults, which would have been about

200,000. Now, assuming the same rate of decline, the young adult membership of the Episcopal Church would be about 158,000. I suspect the rate of decline is even greater than that. Based on the number of studies I read, task forces formed, and grant programs initiated to respond, I think a lot of people are noticing and have little idea what to do.

It is oh so tempting to ask what is different about young people these days, just as my grandmother did. I have come to believe the answer is not a thing. They're the same as they've ever been. Their environment may be different in that church attendance is not nearly the cultural expectation these days that it was 50 years ago. We went to church because our families and friends were there. But the young people themselves, I think, are pretty much the same as always. In fact, I think people are pretty much the same across the board—across age, across race, across gender, across culture, and yes, across religion, across all sociological categories, at least fundamentally, at least emotionally. Church membership is down across all ages, not just young adults.

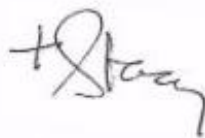
It is in that context that the STEM Camp, to which this newsletter is devoted, strikes me as profoundly important to pay attention to. STEM Camp was conceived by young adults. It is promoted by young adults. It is organized by young adults. It is carried out by young adults. It is funded by the efforts of young adults. It is truly an amazing thing.

Why is that? It seems self-evident that STEM Camp shows us that young people today are somehow not meaner than young people of an earlier time. Some of the young people involved, I know, go to church. Many, I suspect, do not. The difference isn't church. So, what is it?

I don't know for sure, but I'll tell you what I think. I think, indeed I believe, that the difference is in engaging young adults in something that caught their imaginations for good and that, in acting on that, enriched their lives. What they found, I think, is that building relationships with poor children in need of educational enrichment not only benefitted those children but benefitted them. I think it benefitted them in immeasurable ways that have changed their lives for the better. That's why they keep coming back. The young adults who make STEM Camp happen are living proof that what changes them and changes everything else is relationships.

That is how it has really always been. What makes young adults different these days? Not a thing.

Agape,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacy Sauls". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Stacy Sauls
Founder and President

Building Bridges Out of Cardboard and Smiles

A Reflection by Rachel Williams



When asked to return to the Holy Cross School STEM Camp as an instructor for the second year, I quickly jumped at the opportunity. Having the chance to travel to South Africa and work with a unique and talented group of students even once was incredible, and I have been fortunate enough to do it twice!

Teaching the Holy Cross School students about Structures – something I am passionate about – was a fantastic experience as a civil engineering student. During my first year at the camp, I was surprised and excited to see how enthusiastic the students were to learn about Structures and all the other topics we covered. Returning for a second year, it warmed my heart when students remembered who we were and what we taught them, and they were just as excited as the first year to participate in the activities we planned for them. We taught the students introductory physics and structural engineering concepts at the Structures station. We had them implement these concepts when they designed and built their own frames, towers, and bridges.

Throughout the week, it was rewarding to see how much the students cared about their projects and wanted to build the best bridge or tower they could. At the end of the week, one of the Grade 7 boys wrote me a thank you note and said he wanted to get a job in building structures in the future. This made me smile, and I was so happy that one of the students now has an interest in structural engineering because of his experience at this camp.

Aside from the classroom time, it was amazing getting to know the students at the Holy Cross School. One of my favorite parts of the day was conversing and playing with the children on the playground while waiting for their transportation home after camp. During these times, I learned so much about where the students come from, and their experiences and I got to share some of my own life experiences with them. Overall, participating in this STEM camp was a life-changing experience for me, and I hope we encouraged some of the Holy Cross School students – all of whom have bright futures – to pursue education in STEM.



Rachel Williams and students hard at work on their scale bridge model.

Professor Williams and pupil working through a structures worksheet.



Happy Campers with a successful bridge build!



Rachel Williams, center, Isobel Stanger, back left, with Holy Cross School pupils

Love Must Act

Healing Hands

A Reflection by Elaina Howell, PNP



Jen McConnachie, HCS Nurse, Center, Elaina Howell, Left, PNP



My name is Elaina Howell and I'm a board certified, pediatric nurse practitioner from Rochester, NY. I have been in practice for over 20 years as a PNP and over 27 years as a registered nurse. I was given the incredible opportunity to go to Holy Cross School for a week and help the beautiful children there. I wasn't looking to do missions work, but the opportunity came up at just the right time and it seemed so much like a "God moment" that I couldn't pass it up.

This was my very first time being overseas and first time away from my husband and children. It has always been in my heart to work with underserved children in other

countries and I felt like my heart has been getting prepared for this opportunity my entire life.

I was able to do limited physical exams, "school physicals," for all the children at the school throughout the week. Jenny, the beautiful nurse who, in my perception, seems like the "heart" of Holy Cross, helped me get everything ready and was my constant help throughout the week. What a beautiful treasure she is for Holy Cross! Nomzamo helped interpret for the

younger children and was so helpful in getting their names correctly spelled for their charts. Nicci, the amazing principal that the children all adore, was able to help coordinate the days and times for each class to come down to see me. Whenever a finding was made on the exam, she communicated it with the children's families. The little ones enjoyed "helping me" listen to their little hearts for the first time. The look on their sweet faces, when they heard the lub-dub, was priceless and reminded me of the wonder and awe of God's intricate creation. My own children's dentist donated a large tube of dental fluoride that would treat over 100 children. After each exam, every child received a fluoride treatment for their teeth, a new toothbrush, and a reminder to brush twice daily.

For the R-2nd grade children, each one was given a hand-made doll, made by my dear sister-in law and niece back home. Each doll represented a child at Holy Cross, and every one of them was prayed over before they made their long journey into the hands of the children there. I did my very first "community health" in-home visit for a little one who was stung on the face and had a very swollen eye. I was able to treat her. We were able to restock nurse Jenny's precious supply cabinet with much-needed bandages, tape, first aid supplies, ointments, medicines, and deworming agents.

One afternoon, we were able to go into town and do a health clinic as outreach. We went to a neighboring school, and I did school physical exams for several of the children there, with parental permission. This was so rewarding for me as a clinician to see where many of the children at Holy Cross live and to see children right in their own environment.

Later in the week, at Holy Cross, the children in grades 4-7, were able to come down to the health office for health promotion teaching sessions with their same gender peers, separately. During that time, we reviewed body changes, body safety, and making good choices during puberty as it relates to drugs and alcohol.

After our health teaching sessions, when we had a few extra minutes, it was so interesting to talk with the children about their favorite foods, colors, things they're good at, and what they wanted to be when they grew up. Many of them told me they wanted to be doctors, teachers, astronauts, and nurses. It struck me so hard that they have so very little in terms of resources, yet they hope, dream, and wish, just like every child worldwide.

My message to every one of them was that they can do anything! They can become anything. If they work hard and stay in school, and continue to make good choices, the possibilities are endless. Keep dreaming. Keep wishing. Keep hoping. You can do it!

At the end of the week, I was overwhelmed with an ache in my heart because I knew how very much, I would miss all the beautiful children and staff at Holy Cross. I went there to care for children who don't receive a lot of routine medical care. I came home with something far more precious: a renewed heart of gratitude for things I have long taken for granted.

I will cherish in my heart every smile, every hug, every beautiful voice of every child singing their morning hymns, every laugh, and every child. A piece of my heart will always be with the children at Holy Cross, and I pray that one day, I will go back and see each one of their beautiful smiles again and see how big they've all grown! I am so grateful to Love Must Act for

giving me such a beautiful gift that has changed my heart, my perspective, and my life forever.



Elaina Howell, PNP, Daniella Kata (back right) and Nicci Hayes, HCS Principal (center) at STEM Camp closing ceremony.

Help Love Last



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