

paulblog July 2017

Me in the Middle of Mid-America Men

I have been blessed by grace without measure this summer by ministry opportunities and high potential for church growth and spiritual vitality right under your noses that perhaps you are not aware of. I'm talking about the power of Mid-America Men gathering expressly for high adventure, a mutual longing for honest sharing, camaraderie in faith struggles and personal brokenness, joy in mission and service, emotional outdoor worship, and commitments to make life in their own congregations and circles of trust more relevant and meaningful in their lives.

Perhaps when you hear of men's ministry you think of men's fellowship and quarterly "CMF-style" civic-club program breakfasts where a local business leader might speak. Men enjoy a good meal, give handshakes, and then perhaps not interact on this level except maybe after the Property Committee agenda has concluded. These are well and good and fill a valid need among many men in our congregations. I am here to tell you that a significant number of young men, middle-age men, and older men, are desperately wanting to connect to Jesus Christ and other men on levels far beyond the old blueprints. I will mention to you opportunities that have occurred this year because each will happen again and I hope you begin now preparing and planning to wrangle men in your church to take a leap of faith and join. Bottom line, they will return from these ministry encounters uplifted beyond measure and you will see new life in your congregation!

In May, the annual Shannondale Men's Retreat took place in the Ozark Natural Scenic Riverways in Shannon County, Missouri. Mid-America Men met brothers in the United Church of Christ and other denominations and religions. Flooding forced a rain check for canoeing but we hiked, toured natural wonders, relaxed at the gorgeous new Echo Bluff State Park, helped the Ozark's poor, mentored at-risk boys, and at campfire learned how sacred drumming echoes our own rhythms. [Disciples Men Ozarks Retreat](#), May 4-6, 2018 at Shannondale.

In June, six Mid-America Men traveled to the Audubon Center of the North Woods in Sandstone, MN for a five-day, once-in-a-lifetime ritualized retreat called Men's Rites of Passage (MROP). They were met by sixty men from all over North America plus 40 returning men who supported them in their journey toward shedding destructive egos, opening themselves for Christ's forgiveness, acceptance and blessings; plus experiencing revolutionary, transformative motivation for becoming healed, whole leaders in faith. I will be greatly encouraging pastors to be thinking of men you know to hop in our van for the next one in June 2019. www.illumina.org, www.malespiritualitymn.org

At the July Indianapolis General Assembly, the Disciples Men luncheon was sold out by men who came to hear our speaker give a compelling "Easter" sermon about light breaking through the cracks of darkness for a personal resurrection. A 2020 Gathering of Disciples Men is planned at TCU in Ft. Worth. www.discipleshomemissions.org/congregations/disciples-men

Young men, who came to the Christian Regional Youth (CRY) Festival at Drury University and as was witnessed at our other CYF Camps, also claimed the campus to be safe and sacred space. They shed their culturally-driven egos to embrace vulnerability, brotherhood and found shared perspectives and full embrace to help them in their daily challenges. www.mid-america-disciples.org/summer

I have also "embedded" myself in two powerful Mid-America local congregations men's retreat where to no surprise men quickly claimed the safe space to open themselves up to insight while sharing vulnerabilities. Wow!!! No one wanted to leave when they were over.

On behalf of your Regional Ministry Team, I will most gladly come to your church to help you get the ball rolling on launching effective ministry for men. I often find willing recruits of men who experienced what I have to come with me as they are longing to reconnect and share. Please do not hesitate and reach out at paul.ccma@sbcglobal.net or 636-221-7065.