

Purpose of the Youth & Family Department

The purpose of the youth and family ministries department is to strengthen churches of our Convention by assisting them minister effectively to youth, young adults and families.

We attempt to do this through the following means:

1. Events for youth: To challenge youth (ages 12-18) to commit their lives to Christ, grow in the Christian faith and contribute to the strengthening of their home church, we sponsor events that are oriented around evangelism, discipleship, leadership, worship and mission.
2. Equipping leaders: To help leaders become more effective in youth ministry and contribute to the health of their church, we sponsor training and encouraging events for both volunteer and paid youth leaders.
3. Young adults: To help young adults (ages 18+) grow in their Christian faith and contribute to the strengthening of their home church, we sponsor events and initiatives that encourage a healthy transition from high school to adulthood through a focus on community, worship, mission and the development of a Christian worldview.
4. Family: To help families strengthen their Christian commitment and contribute more fully to the life of their local church, we sponsor educational and missional events that focus on strengthening marriages, encouraging parents, and facilitating hands-on family mission experiences.
5. Research: To help churches and leaders better understand their youth, young adults and families, we conduct original research into the identity, beliefs and practices of those we minister to.
6. Speaking and consulting: To champion effective ministry to youth, young adults and families, our staff are available to speak at events and meet with local church and Association leadership teams.

History of the CABC's Youth & Family Ministries Department

Our Convention's youth and family ministries department was founded in 2001 as a result of desire expressed during the Convention Review Process to build upon islands of strength in Atlantic Baptist life. The department's purpose is to strengthen churches of our Convention by assisting them minister effectively to youth, young adults and families. While family ministry is a new emphasis, ministry to youth has been carried out at a Convention level for many decades.

In 2001 the youth and family ministries department was established and Rev. Bruce Fawcett, who had previously served as Director of Youth Ministries in the former Christian Training department, was

appointed as Director of Youth and Family Ministries. Mrs. Ann Hayward was appointed as Administrative Assistant. Working groups of grassroots leaders in youth and family ministries were established to ensure that newly designed and existing programs met the needs of churches. Previously existing events for youth, such as the Springforth youth conference and the Tidal Impact mission program, continued to grow and flourish. New events such as the Quest leadership conference were added and the Atlantic Baptist Youth organization and its executive were revamped and revitalized. New ministries to families such as the Mission: Possible parenting seminars, the Family Mission Tour and an emphasis on strengthening marriages were also added. A partnership was established with Acadia Divinity College (ADC) to create a youth ministry department at the seminary in order to provide courses for ADC students, laypeople and as continuing education for youth pastors. The centerpiece of the curriculum is a international summer ministry and study option in Prague, Czech Republic hosted by Canadian Baptist missionary and Acadia adjunct youth ministry professor, Dr. Jeff Carter. The numbers of youth involved in local church youth groups and the number of churches and pastoral fields with youth groups continued to multiply.

By 2002 the Council of the Convention, witnessing a rapid growth of the department's ministries, authorized a quiet fundraising campaign. The goal was to seek financial support for adding an Associate Director and increased program funds to expand the department's ministry impact. Twelve generous donors pledged a total of a quarter of a million dollars to enable the Convention to assist and support local church ministry to youth and families.

By early 2003 Rev. Rob Nysten had joined the staff of the youth and family ministries department. Ministry to young adults was strengthened through the adding of international short-term mission trips and a new outdoor worship festival called Converge. Ministry to pastors' families was extended beyond the existing Ministry Wives Retreat to include a new retreat for teenage children of pastors and other Christian workers called Link. Atlantic Baptist input into the national and international youth ministry stage was increased by Rob's appointment to serve as Chair of Canadian Baptist Youth and as the Canadian representative to the Baptist World Alliance youth committee.

By 2004 Mr. Gerry Carter joined the department as the first dollar a year staff person. A retired civil servant, Gerry assisted in the administration and planning of events for youth and families as Registrar in Youth and Family Ministries. In an attempt to increase the effectiveness of ministry to youth and families through research into their identity and ministry needs, the department hired Mrs. Jody Linkletter as a part-time researcher in partnership with Acadia Divinity College. Jody conducted original research and shared the results through seminars and presentations.

By 2005 Bruce Fawcett was appointed Director of Communications in addition to continuing to serve as Director of Youth and Family Ministries and Director of the Youth Ministry Program at Acadia Divinity College. Mrs. Ann Hayward became Receptionist at the Convention office. Rev. Dale Stairs was called to join the department staff as an Associate Director. Dale took on responsibility for some programs previously directed by Bruce and became our Convention's point person for developing a new program in partnership with Acadia Divinity College to challenge high school youth to consider God's call to vocational ministry. Dale also worked to develop increased opportunities for families to participate in

short-term mission trips. Dale is joined in the developing of overseas mission opportunities by our second dollar a year staff person, Dr. Bob Berry. Bob is the retired head of Canadian Baptist Ministries and has vast international mission experience. In his role as Missiologist Bob will assist Dale develop and lead quality mission experiences for retirees, parents and teens, couples and other family units.

In 2006 Rev Rob Nylen became the Director of Youth & Family Ministries as well as the Director of the Youth Ministry program of Acadia Divinity College. Dr. Bruce Fawcett became the Associate Executive Minister while maintaining his communications portfolio. Bruce had been part time in the department prior to these changes so we needed to find a part time replacement. The Convention called Jody Linkletter to fill this role. Jody was working on her PhD in Wales and was open to take up a considerable amount of programming on behalf of the Youth & Family Department working to oversee LINK, Atlantic Baptist Youth, Converge, Quest, as well as working on the Middle School track of Springforth. In 2007 we added a third dollar-a-year staff member in Kevin Munroe. Kevin is from Saint John, NB and worked with Corrections Canada. He and his family have been very involved at Main Street Church where he has given leadership as a deacon and also as a youth leader. Kevin helps lead some of mission trips that our department runs, an area he has a fair amount of experience in.

2008 saw more changes for the department as Rev. Rob Nylen resigned in order to become senior pastor at Main Street Church in Saint John. Rev. Dale Stairs became the acting Director in April and officially became Director in September. Dale also took on oversight for the youth ministry program at ADC. As well, in September, Jody Linkletter transitioned from part time to full time as an Associate Director, taking on the extra responsibilities of directing Springforth and a growing partnership with FamilyLife Canada. Mrs. Jacqueline Derrah joined the department at this time as well, serving as a part time administrative assistant.

In January of 2010 a new and very intentional training program for volunteer youth leaders was established. The Youth Leader Training Program provided an 18 month part time program that introduced the foundational concepts of youth ministry to students. The first class was full! In May Dale took on the role of chairing the Canadian Baptist Youth team, and the privilege of representing Canadian youth ministry to the Baptist World Alliance. September saw more changes to the department as Jody moved to a part time position, also becoming the Associate Director of the D. Min program at ADC. In order to maintain and build the emphasis on family ministry, Mrs. Marion Jamer joined the staff as the first part time Coordinator of Family Ministries.

In its short history the youth and family ministries department has grown to become one of the largest and most comprehensive denominationally-based ministries to youth and families in Canada. The strength of its ministry is a credit to previous Convention staff who established and built a significant ministry to teenagers, to the many youth leaders and clergy who invested countless hours in designing and leading programs for youth and families, and to generous donors who had a vision to help parents and churches reach the next generation with the gospel and see them mature in their faith. Mostly though, the department's ministry influence is due to God who, in his providence, decided to bless a small group of Baptists in Eastern Canada who desperately desired to have strong Christian families and a new generation of passionate followers of Jesus Christ.