

Youth Evangelize the Globe Via Internet

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A Minnesota youth pastor is calling for youth to go on an online missions trip and evangelize their peers through social networking sites.



Jan. 23, 2009 – On Feb. 1 youth groups around the world will be going on a two-week missions trip from the comfort of their homes.

Through his online missions trip, Tim Schmoyer is encouraging young people to evangelize their generation via social networking Web sites such as Facebook, MySpace and World of Warcraft.

“Missions doesn’t have to be limited to a summer trip where you raise lots of money and go somewhere for two weeks and then come home,” said Schmoyer, pastor of student ministries at Evangelical Covenant Church of Alexandria in Alexandria, Minn. “Missions is an everyday thing, and with the power of the Internet it’s never been as easy as it is today to go across the world and talk to someone for free.”

Schmoyer said young people already spend a great deal of time on the Web, so he’s encouraging them to use that time to share Christ with their friends.

An estimated 2,500 teens and young adults from Canada, Bermuda, the United Kingdom, Australia, Indonesian and the United States have registered at to participate in the outreach. More than 1,500 students also have joined the Online Missions Trip Facebook group.

Students are being urged to use thought-provoking videos, photos, instant messages and text messages as a means to start conversations about God. “I want these kids to grow up being comfortable having those spiritual conversations with their friends ... not just expecting that it’s the church’s job,” Schmoyer told *Charisma*.

Schmoyer, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, said that he has long been “discontent” with the ineffective results of

youth group outreaches. He said most consist of a church putting on a concert, inviting a popular guest speaker and telling the students to bring their unsaved friends. "I think it was unintentionally teaching our kids to outsource their evangelism to someone on a stage," he said.

Schmoyer hopes the online missions trip will not only result in decisions for Christ, but that it will cause young people to realize that it is their responsibility to witness to their friends, not their pastor's.

In the weeks leading up to the missions trip, students will be learning techniques for sharing Christ with their friends. Posted on the ministry's Web site is evangelism-training material for youth groups, along with books and videos that teach students how to witness to people from various religious backgrounds. The Web site also details a discipleship process for the students who accept Christ during the outreach.

Though Schmoyer says the Web resources are helpful, he says the most important and overlooked tool on the site is the 24-hour prayer section. "Any life-change that takes place is totally and only the result of the Holy Spirit working in someone's life," he said. "I think the key ... way that happens is by just saturating this entire trip in prayer."

Schmoyer is asking for volunteers to sign up to pray for the trip, in hopes that there will be people praying 24 hours a day for the entire two-weeks.

Youth groups nationwide are also urging their students to make prayer a major focus of their missions preparation. "We will be encouraging students to concentrate on praying for four or five of their friends leading up and during this trip," said Shawn M. Shoup, student pastor at Destiny Foursquare Church in Rapid City, S.D. "Our students will be plowing the ground spiritually ... sending out prayer support letters, fasting and praying in preparation."

Schmoyer said he is praying that the missions trip will not end on Feb. 14, but that it will inspire youth to make evangelism part of their everyday lives.

"Hopefully their mindsets will start to shift," he told *Charisma*. "That they would develop lifestyles that are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading as they engage with unbelievers throughout the rest of their lives."—**Felicia Mann**