

Youth for Christ President, CEO Dan Wolgemuth Announces Retirement: 'Welcoming Future Change'

After 16 years of outstanding service and passionate dedication to Youth for Christ, Dan Wolgemuth is retiring from his position as president and CEO of the ministry.

Wolgemuth joined YFC in 2005, committed to serve as president and CEO for a decade. However, Dan and his wife, Mary, felt led by the Lord to continue serving for an extended, yet indefinite, amount of time. In 2020, Wolgemuth made his announcement to finally retire but, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remained at the helm of YFC to help navigate through a difficult time for our nation and the world. Now, the time is right, as Wolgemuth prepares to welcome new leadership.

The Wolgemuths have a long and rich history with YFC. Dan has served on the National Board of Trustees from 1995 to present. Wolgemuth's father, Sam, served as president of Youth for Christ USA from 1965-1973.

"YFC is moving in the direction of the heart of Christ—finding that kid on the margins who cannot speak for themselves," Wolgemuth said. "This is leading a movement into a place where it lives into a kingdom identity. It lives into the beautiful kingdom space of reflecting who we are in local communities and raising up leaders that reflect that reality.

"I've had the opportunity to lead in several different organizations and environments. There's nothing like leading in this space. One, for the sake of the mission, the calling, but secondarily, because, when your objective is unity, it means you die to your own agenda on many occasions, and that's

a burden that is worth the weight. The sufficiency of Christ has been more evident than ever.”

In addition to the Wolgemuth announcement, YFC has appointed Jacob Bland as president and CEO. Currently YFC’s chief of staff to the CEO, Bland will assume the new leadership role on June 1, 2021. After a far-reaching, intensely prayerful search that resulted in 230 applicants and produced eight candidates, the YFC Board of Trustees selected between two people, and Bland was unanimously voted in as the new leader for YFC USA. Bland has been involved with YFC for 23 years—first serving as a high school student in a YFC music group, then as a volunteer and was consistently promoted up through the ranks over two decades.

In regard to Bland’s succeeding his leadership, and what that means for YFC, Wolgemuth stated, “It’s about raising up leaders who are far less familiar or concerned with corporate hierarchy. Leaders who are more familiar and comfortable talking about their community and significant relationships than they are with [organizational] charts. I look at that future and welcome the change, even as I realize that I’m not the one to lead YFC there. This is a righteous ambition, but one for others to guide and lead us toward. I see movement leaders being birthed and grown who can lead in this environment—from Jake Bland, right through the senior leadership team and into local chapters—they’re there. They’re ready. I’m ready to step to the back of the pack, in full support, on my knees, and encouraging those who will lead us forward.”

When asked to provide a message for the YFC board and Bland, YFC’s incoming president/CEO, Wolgemuth said, “Cling to Jesus, listen well, love generously and build systems of accountability around yourself. Early on, I saw that the YFC board was made up of good and godly people that God put in my life, our life. And I said, ‘if you invite me to this role, I’ll say yes.’ I trusted them for 16 years. That’s been my

message to the board. If you challenge something, if you're uncomfortable with something, if you think something's out of alignment, I will do what you believe is best. I am accountable to the authority of a board and not the reverse. I think that sort of trust is largely absent in many circles. This is a godly, good board that God has ordained, blessed and anointed. They will speak wise words. They will lead and contribute sacrificially to support our mission, and Jake Bland as our new leader in the next season of YFC."

As Wolgemuth passes the baton to Bland, there is a sentimental atmosphere around Youth for Christ, mixed with an air of excitement, as these two men have both devoted themselves to the youth ministry of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

YFC has chapters impacting thousands of communities across the nation that seek out and serve youth from all walks of life. Many teens are silently struggling through a variety of challenging issues—and now they see the living power of a loving God.

Youth for Christ has been a pillar of missional ministry since 1944, when the Rev. Billy Graham served as YFC's first full-time staff member. Since then, YFC has continued to be both a rural and urban ministry on mission, and it is always about the message of Jesus. YFC reaches young people everywhere, working together with the local church and other like-minded partners to raise up lifelong followers of Jesus who lead by their godliness in lifestyle, devotion to the Word of God and prayer, passion for sharing the love of Christ and commitment to social involvement. YFC operates in over 100 nations and has more than 160 chapters that impact communities across America.

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