

James Camden | Peer Ministry

2A: Peer Ministry



When given the opportunity, young people are at their very best when they are ministering to each other. This youth to youth ministry is called peer ministry and it can be a great way to reach out to young people not participating in ministry now. James will share tools for empowering young people in your community to reach out to their peers. 28-year old James Camden works full-time as the Director of Lasallian Youth Ministry for the De La Salle Brothers in the District of Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. He has completed a Bachelor of Arts in Media & Communications, a Diploma in Journalism, a Graduate Diploma in Education, and a Graduate

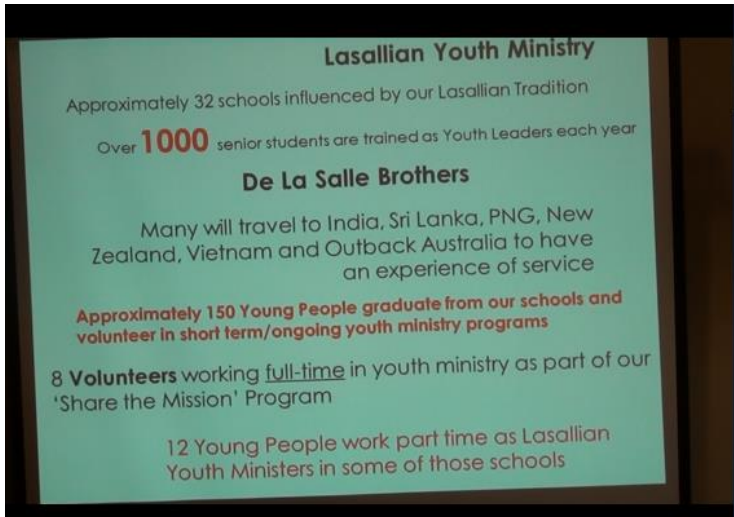
Certificate in Religious Education. His role involves managing the Lasallian Youth Ministry Team and the volunteer programs of the District.

Who Am I? James encouraged us all to know and be able to share our story in 15 minutes. You should be willing to share the highs and the lows and to speak about where God was present in your life. Young people want to know us and we can't get to know them without being able to share about ourselves. James put this into action by sharing his story: My story begins at Oakhill Secondary School in Sydney. This is where I went to school and I got to experience peer to peer ministry. Now I am in a position of managing peer to peer ministry at Colleges in four countries. My background includes Journalism. I did one-line in about 60 episodes of Home and Away. I went back to uni to do teaching (RE, English, Drama). I got rejected from the Hi Five band because I wasn't the right height. The Head Brother at De La Salle Brothers rang me to say he was setting up a new ministry and invited me to be part of it. For us at De La Salle it is all about St John Baptist de la Salle who had a huge impact on education in the world. I took my girlfriend to a remote area where I work with Aboriginal people. I decided I would propose to her at Wolf Creek Crater. Thankfully she said yes! Our job is to bring young people closer to Christ.

At De La Salle we use these words to express our faith – FAITH, SERVICE, COMMUNITY. These are great words to describe youth ministry – we use them – but you can use them too.

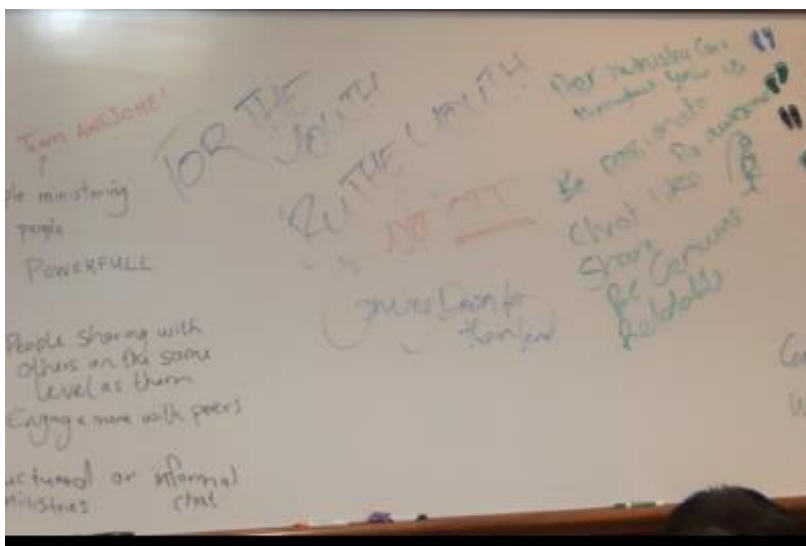
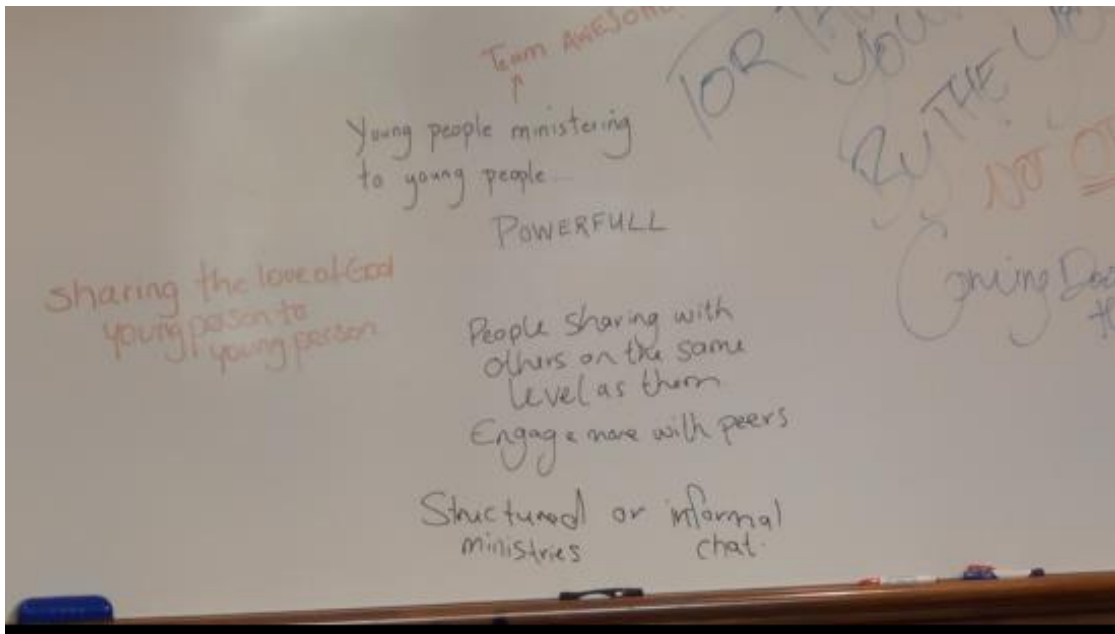
Fr Christian Fini described young people and youth leaders as being like a mobile phone. A lot of them were given their iPhone from their parents. Their parents choose for them what provider that phone is going to be on. It's no use having a provider unless those providers have got really great phone towers near where you are. He described that youth ministers are the phone towers for our young people's faith. They have the phone. They have the provider and whatever that provider is giving them – whatever version of the Catholic faith that might be. If there isn't a cell tower near them – a leader, campus minister or a great teacher who loves to minister to young people then that's your job – be the phone tower and bring them closer to Jesus.

James shared about Lasallian Youth Ministry:



We played a game: rum sum sum

What do you think peer ministry might involve?



Everything on the board is correct ...

- The most challenging ministry is the same age to the same age. Both need to be formed in order to have a dialogue.
- The most common example of peer ministry would be 17-18 year olds ministering to 11-14 year olds. They have had a bit of a journey – they can find some commonalities. What were the things in my life that were challenging that if I open up will be a topic that is relevant and of use to that age group? Examples might include: friendship issues, not belonging to a team, moving groups, separation and divorce of families, parent or grandparent passing away. These are real issues for young people. If an older student can share that they had a really challenging time and that life is now OK then they can talk to that person more about it in a more structured and helpful way. We have seen how powerful this is.

What is it like to be a young person today?

James played “Mouse trap” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHImpRRCX5U>) as an example of what young people are doing now.

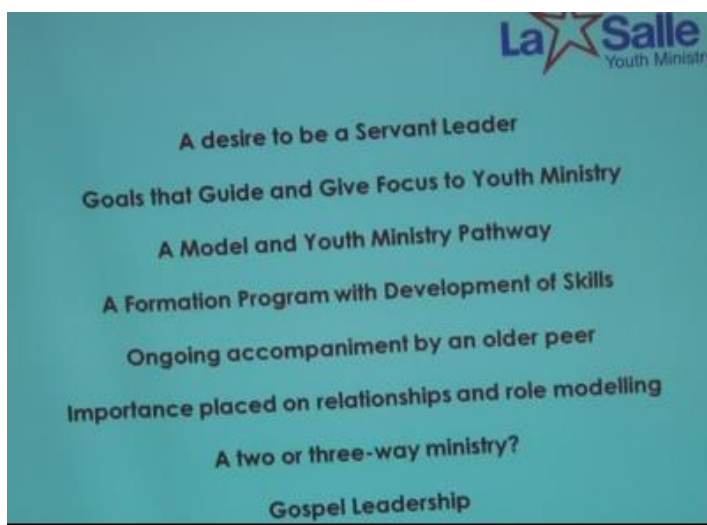
Like the mouse, young people are sniffing around wanting to know more about life. This is why we need a team approach in youth ministry so that we have people of numerous age groups in our ministry teams. Great youth ministers go on to be leaders in other parts of the Church. I do not believe that a 30 or 40 year old can't do good youth ministry. Sometimes the curiosity of young people can lead them to find the wrong people or people who can't give them guidance. Step in help them lift that bar at key times for them. Most of the time we are responders. You are the front line of working with young people and the kinds of challenges and issues that they face.

How do we build resilience, a sense of belonging to a community, a connection to something greater? Young people respond better to this type of phrase than to words like “evangelise”.

We need a good team of all age groups to appeal to the wide age group that is youth ministry.

We want to build resilience and help them have a connection to something greater.

We also want to build a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment that we see in this video clip. Slip n Slide – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wAjpMP5eyo>



To do this ministry you need to have a desire to be a servant leader – modelled on Jesus himself.

You are going to need goals that guide and give focus to what you achieve. You want to train the older young people with exactly what they need to do this ministry. Need ongoing skills, challenges about what is important to the young people they are working with. It is through sharing that they will learn the most.

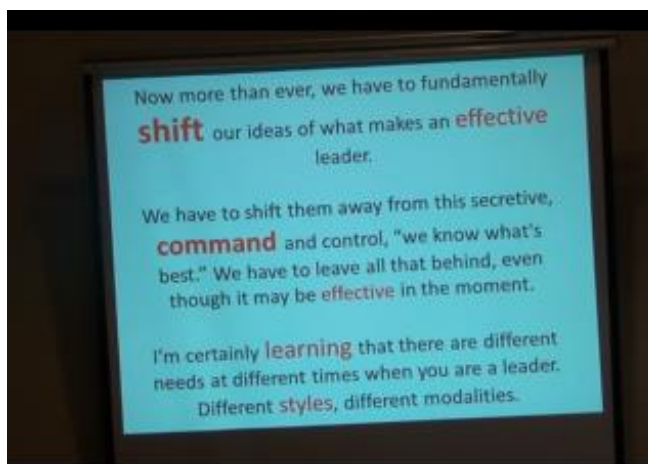
An ongoing accompaniment by an older mentor is recommended. The great peer to peer models are where the 13 year old is taking little kids for children's liturgy during Mass. Those 13 year olds are being ministered to by 17-19 at Friday night youth group. Those 17-19 are being ministered by young adults playing music on Sunday night at Mass and they are being mentored by young or older people who have a passion and a desire to still be involved with young people in ministry. Suddenly there is all these people accompanying each other. If a link in the chain disintegrates or breaks then this no longer becomes sustainable. Making it sustainable for the long journey is key to a successful programme. People can come and go from this but there are people who want to be part of it from now until whenever. Everybody has a place to importance of relationships. If this doesn't happen it undermines the whole process. There is a responsibility placed on relationship and positive Christian role model. If somebody in this chain doesn't possess these qualities then it can be too hard to bounce back. This is definitely a risk factor. You have to be very open and specific when talking to young people - they don't get a choice about whether they want to be a role model - their choice is whether they are going to be a positive role model or whether they are going to be a negative role model. It's really important to be gospel focused – bringing everything back to our faith.

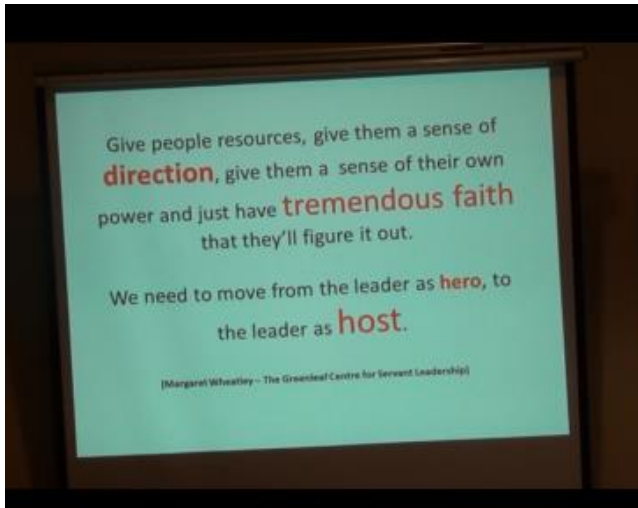
I love this Lord of the Rings quote:

“I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had ever happened.

So do all who live to see such times. All we have to do is what to do with the time that is given to us.”

So in inviting young people to be part of a peer ministry model they have to decide what they are going to do with the time that God has given to them. Hopefully this will be something really great and fulfilling.





[Quote above from: Margaret Wheatley – The Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership]

I've met a lot of youth leaders in my time. I've met many parishes where one leader was a solo artist. As soon as they moved on everything fell apart. They never built a team around them and never made the young people feel that they could continue what had been started by that leader. We need our older young people to be hosts and inviting others into the team.

3D leadership - What might it mean for leaders to be 3D leaders? Responses included:

- Looking at situations from different angles
- Maybe being able to be in different roles – multi-dimensions – leader, facilitator, nourisher, multi-dimensional
- 3 different strategies
- Using technology of the day to build faith
- We need more really engaging people in the Catholic Church
- 2D movie is old – 3D is the way now – need to be more engaging with people
- 3D could be the likes of them looking at us- they need to see that we are 3D people – important for them to know that they see different dimensions (sides) in us – what they see is what they get. If they work out that you are not the authentic person you are called to be then we have lost them .
- Get involved in their life in general. Talking to them about other parts of their life – eg taking an interest in how their soccer team went last weekend.

James talked about an activity that he plays where everyone in a group gets a lemon. They are encouraged to build a relationship with that lemon. They notice what distinguishes that lemon from other lemons. Afterwards all the lemons are put back in a box. When they are put out again there is a real sense of fulfilment of recognising their lemon and getting that lemon back. Even though all the lemons all looked the same, you worked really hard to get to know that particular lemon. That's what it can be about being a leader that really knows every young person in their group. Not only great for them but good for you as well.

Faith | Service | Community

These are three words that are good to teach young people. I often describe to them you can use the S-T-A-R method:

See a need (it could be 12 and 13 year olds who need a personal role model in their lives)

Tell God about it in prayer (maybe it is that they share in a youth group and then maybe the group prays about it)

Assess your gifts (hopefully God will help you discern both what your gifts are and what gifts you need from others – this is where we involve people from other age groups as well as they will have gifts and skills that you don't have)

Reach out (Let's do something – let's not just be people who study the bible and talk about our faith – let's take the next step – let's go out and do things for others – that's what Jesus did. He gathered a group around him, he went out and spread the good news. That is also the mission for us).

This is a great video that can be used to describe various parts of youth ministry. My meaning at the end of it will be different to your meaning.

Light Headed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCpWbuKwIPc>

What message does this clip possibly contain for those of us working in youth ministry?

- Don't run away
- We are all made from the same wax
- We all need the light in our life so that we can move forward
- It's important to carry the light, but it is important to share that light, sometimes it necessary for someone else needs to carry the light
- We were a bit concerned about the abandonment issue! Think about young people who are on a leadership mission for a year – some of those young people are stepping outside their comfort zone. Not everyone will be successful. Even those that we might not label as being successful will along the way have touched a whole lot of other people and maybe inspired some – you might not be the person who makes it to the end but you can see that others do get there! If the one person who hadn't run out in the first place, even though they might not have completed the race then others would never have gone. You might be part of a bigger plan. You might not understand how you fit into the plan but others will. We are all different parts of the same candle.
- We won't all be successful in youth ministry – but there will be some that keep that light going. Someone will launch off that cliff and inspire others.
- The real importance of community – along that way they touched a whole lot of other people. The ones who stuck together – somebody made it to the end. You might not be the person who makes it to the end – you can see
- If that first person hadn't run out then the others never would have gone. Sometimes you are one part of a plan.

Final comment:

How is what I am doing helping me and those around me?

How is my faith and my story affecting those around me?

We are in community and everything that we do affects those around us.