

THE GLOBE



Summer 2007

News for the Passport World



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Let it rain!

Students and world relief

Colleen Burroughs
Executive VP, Passport, Inc.

What do you do when God calls you to something that at the time made a lot of sense? You know - the way dreams do when you are asleep, but when you wake up you realize how crazy it must sound. Feels a bit like Noah hammering away on a boat sitting perched on dry ground. Like Noah, the country of Malawi watches the sky for rain too. Only I don't think the cyclical drought there has anything to do with God's judgment on the people. I think it has more to do with an *Inconvenient Truth*.

In the past year Passport, Inc. has adopted the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and has voted to fully bring *Watering Malawi* under its ministry umbrella. These decisions have shifted and expanded the texture of this student ministry organization.

For those of you scratching your head about MDG's and *Watering Malawi* let me back up and say that Passport campers have in the last year responded to a plea to provide water in Africa. The Millennium Development Goals are



"Youth from Fredericksburg built a treadle pump like the ones used to water gardens in Malawi, and then brought it to camp!"

eight initiatives created and agreed upon globally to wipe out extreme poverty inside twenty-five years. Google it.

Watering Malawi is a specific initiative to provide simple irrigation systems and access to clean water in one of the poorest nations on the planet.

So why has an organization best known for hosting hoards of children and young people during summer taken on watering a country? How do screaming adolescents and world relief actually fit together? That's easy. Really well.

Passport teenagers, children, their congregations and their schools have responded in mind-boggling ways in the last 18 months.

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Turns out you really can bottle up and sell all that energy. Children and teenagers are chock full of great ideas and the audacity to think they can work. Show them a problem that needs a solution and they will dream one up. Better yet, show them how it connects with what they understand of the Gospel and God's creations and our responsibility to be about restoration in the world – and voila, you have inspiration!

As Passport is already well into its 15th summer, we are smack in the middle of life between



childhood and maturity. When you think about it like that, redefining ourselves, building giant lifeboats, and growing up as an organization in unexpected ways is exactly what we should be doing as a ministry. Now, where's the rain?

Good Grief

Passport offers a place for finding hope.

Daniel Ingram

In March, a busload of baseball players from Bluffton University was on its way through Atlanta en route to Florida when the bus plunged over an overpass. Six were killed in the tragic accident.

At Passport, we were saddened by the news, and like many, struggled to know how we might respond compassionately to the Bluffton University community. We should have realized that God was already at work. We began receiving responses through d365.org, our online devotional site, from people who were praying for the university. Requests for all matters of prayer are common at this site, but what surprised us was that these individuals indicated that they found out about [d365](http://d365.org) directly from the Bluffton University website.

During the season of Lent, the university's religious life department highlighted "Journey to the Cross," [d365](http://d365.org)'s Lenten series. This particular series focused on selected beatitudes from Jesus' preaching. The week of this tragedy, the theme was "Blessed are those who mourn."

As a graduate of Virginia Tech, I watched the events of April 16 unfold with particular awareness. The reports filtered in...1 dead, 17 dead,



and then reports that this may be the worst shooting in U.S. history leaving more than 30 dead. A shooting spree that started in my old dorm, and ended in the familiar classrooms where I had studied left all of us with unanswerable questions and rarely elevated feelings of fear, anger and sadness.

Recognizing this collective grief, Passport rewrote the devotions scheduled for that week. Understanding that many of those who visit [d365](http://d365.org) are youth and college students, we were compelled to provide a safe place to hear a word of hope and a movement toward peace.



[d365](http://d365.org) actually began during the season of Advent in 2001 with a series called "Following the Star." In response to the terror attacks on September 11, Passport wanted to provide a place where people could find hope at a time when we were picking up the pieces, physically and emotionally.

We are thankful to be poised to provide this free resource for all people. Although many will look toward God in the face of tragedy, we hope that d365.org is a respite for all who seek God, 365 days of the year.

Logging On...

Paying attention to your youth online.

Marnie Fisher-Ingram

About a year and a half ago, concerned by watching "To Catch a Predator" every week on NBC, and hearing my youth discuss their love affair with MySpace and Facebook, online social networking sites, I decided to join both. As I found my youths' accounts I was shocked. The youth were so free with what they posted – their names, ages, city, school and pictures were available for all to see. I was horrified. Over the course of the next few weeks I had discussions with my youth and their parents about the information that was being shared freely for all to see. Most of the youth ended up changing information on their page, or making it so that their profiles were private, meaning only their friends could see the page.

In the weeks and months that followed, I encouraged my other youth minister friends to log on to both as well. We had fun discussions about the things we were learning about our youth. Seeing a youth's page on MySpace or Facebook really is like seeing a slice of their world. It's amazing and I can honestly say that I am addicted and love both! Here is my attempt to help you navigate the waters that are MySpace and Facebook.

- Log on. I know you've been fighting it. Stop that inner struggle and give in. I promise your youth are on, and this is a way to connect with them. Go to www.facebook.com or www.myspace.com.
- On both sites you can search for your youth by name or by email address. Once you find one, you will find the rest.
- Add your youth as your friends. This way they know you have seen their pages. Inspect their pages closely. If you find anything alarming, talk to the youth immediately.
- If you find something alarming or very inappropriate contact the youth and their parents face to face. While we want to be friends with our youth,

remember that their parents have trusted you with them on various trips and outings. It is your responsibility to help watch out for them.

- Use the sites as ministry resources. You can post links, devotional thoughts, bulletins that remind youth about events and deadlines. This is a new day and age we are in and these sites can be a resource.
- Hold a parent meeting. Have your computer there ready to show them how to navigate MySpace and Facebook. Let them know if their youth has a page on one or both. Encourage the parents to get accounts and check up on their youth. Let the parents know that you have a page on both and that you are using it as resource. Don't require youth to have an account, but let parents know that if their youth does have an account, you will be checking the pages weekly. Remember it takes a village!



If you are still hesitant, I encourage you to at least log on and look at your youth's pages. I promise you will be amazed. The world is a changin', and we need to stay up to date and current. MySpace and Facebook are just one more way to do that.

The Internet & Youth Ministry

David Burroughs

The church has been late to the Internet party. There, I said it. Most of you have probably been working on some church committee for several years asking for computer upgrades: decent, content rich church websites, and generally pushing for your church to actually join the 21st century!

Just 10 years ago, who could have predicted the Tsunami of information available to anyone with a phone line and a computer? If my eight year old children ask me a question I can't answer, they google it and come and teach me about the eating habits of the Watussi – google it.

But our generation is comfortable with blogs and Facebook, and Crosswalk and ichat. So how does the Internet fit into holistic, post-modern ministry with teenagers who grew up with computers, video games and cell phones?

I say that we meet the teenagers where they are – in a digital world. There are new and creative ways to find, interact with and minister to your youth being introduced almost every day. The key is to find something that works with a majority if not all of your youth and stick with it. Just because a new thing comes out doesn't mean you need to drop your plan and jump ship.

This list doesn't even scratch the surface. Do you have an Internet based ministry tool that is working for your group?

Send me an email and I will post more ideas on our website www.passportcamps.org!



Here are a few ideas that I have seen work in youth ministry situations (a list to be outdated perhaps by publication of this newsletter!)

- **Group Texting**

You can group text your youth with cell phones about tonight's special meeting. For a fee, Club Texting will text your entire group about upcoming events. Find out more at: www.clubtexting.com

- **Blogging**

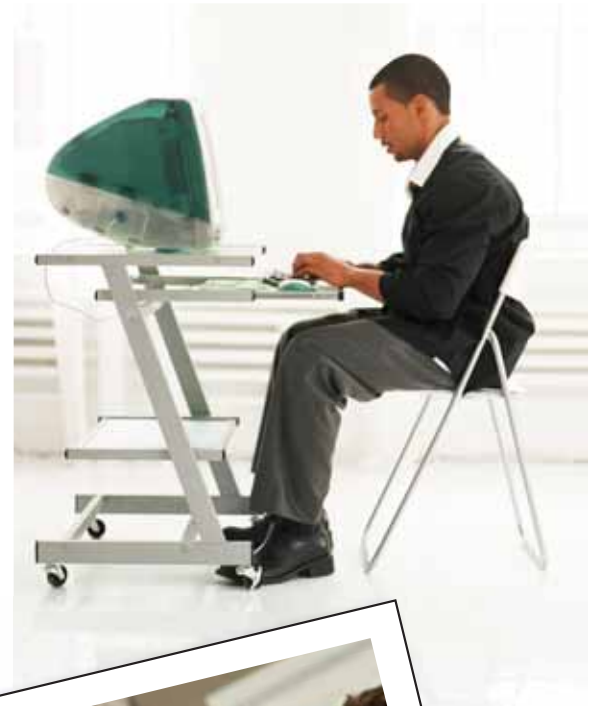
You can blog about Sunday's sermon or get the youth into a conversation about next Wednesday's Bible study theme. A blog is a web log (combined and shortened into blog) where a user can type journal style reflections, and other users can respond and link to you on their blog, etc. The best free site is as follows: www.blogger.com

- **Facebook/MySpace**

All your youth are on one, the other or both, and so you need to be there also. Read more about these options on page 3.

facebook

myspace.com
a place for friends



- **Goodsearch**

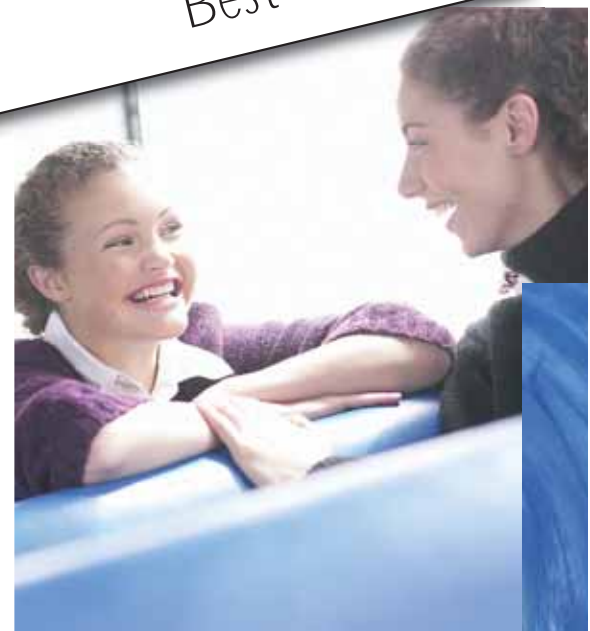
This is a Yahoo powered search engine that lets you choose Passport as your designated nonprofit. Then when you search, Goodsearch will donate one penny for every search you do! OK, shameless plug, but it adds up!! Visit www.goodsearch.com to give it a try.

- **PrayerBuddy**

This is a unique site that has been in development for several years. I am a friend with one of the site's creators. The idea is that a group of folks join a digital prayer group and the system calls the group to pray six times a day, and runs them through a common prayer experience, for example, a Psalm or the Lord's Prayer. Though not for everyone, and perhaps more for your older, or college students, this can be a meaningful experience for some – a sort of digital monastic lifestyle. To sign up, visit www.prayerbuddy.org

- **d365.org**

Passport created a way to provide an online devotional experience for youth at our site, d365.org. Visitors stay an average of over six minutes moving through the 5 steps of our devotion, while listening to contemplative music. This free resource can easily be linked to your church website. For more information, visit www.d365.org.



Cyberspace:

The Final Frontier?

Mark McClintock

As a child, I thrilled to the exploits of Captain Kirk and his crew on the television show, *Star Trek*. Who wouldn't be amazed by a future in which the universe is the frontier to be explored, computers serve humans in tasks ranging from navigation to food preparation to recreation, and where people can be disintegrated and transported instantly from one location to another? And now, with the incredible advance of computer technology, this future is "virtually" the present!

Today, children may "boldly go" to websites for research (about the universe as well as more earth-bound topics), order anything from food to books to toys, and play games to their hearts' content. The Internet has exploded old methods of research and expanded educational tools that many schools now recommend and even require that their students use. Lest those of us in the ministry of religious education feel neglected, there are also sites with scripture-based clip-art, games, crafts, devotions, and (of course) tons of merchandise. The "web" also blasts open old boundaries for communication, providing chat rooms, bulletin boards, blogs, and other resources for sharing ideas. What an exciting "USS Enterprise" the personal computer is!



However, just as Kirk et al. ran into perilous situations, the Internet poses potential dangers for today's youngsters as well. Their identities are chopped up into digital bits and teleported all over the world, rendering them vulnerable to predators. The possibility of intentionally or accidentally stumbling onto news that is inappropriate for a child's cognitive and emotional development (not to mention pornography and hate speech) is a mouseclick away. Youth use sites like Facebook and MySpace for "cyberbullying" as well as to post alarming and destructive thoughts and feelings. Perhaps less apparent are the insidious ways websites designed for children teach materialist and consumer values. While concerned parent groups have striven for decades to reduce television's aggressive marketing to young viewers, they now face a larger challenge with the accessibility of the web.

For example, one of the hottest trends is "Webkinz World," which combines the Beanie Baby craze with virtual pets. Children buy a

plush animal that comes with a secret code. They enter the code in the company's website and officially "adopt" their pet, who now has a virtual counterpart. Providing care and nurture for the animal is a positive element, and the site limits users' ability to communicate with each other to select phrases. Much of the site is devoted to games, a few of which have educational merit, but most of which are designed to earn "KinzCash." Children spend this money on food as well as new rooms, furnishings, and trinkets for their creatures. In general, Webkinz is a fun and innocuous site with much to be commended. Still, some of the games resemble casino operations, such as a slot machine and roulette wheel, and chance is sometimes more important than skill. Webkinz has proved to be a merchandising bonanza for the Ganz company, as children insist on having the newest toy and the largest collection. And the company is expanding the types of items they sell as well as softening some of the safeguards for inter-user conversation.



Now that the Internet is established as a resource primarily for the wealthy, such shameless marketing comes as no surprise. Spiritual mentors for children must, however, help children measure the web's values against Jesus' admonition to share with everyone and

avoid personal gain as our motivation. With Christ's instruction to protect children, we also need to equip families with "safe surfing" resources. One helpful website is CyberAngels.org, with a mission to prevent the victimization of Internet users and provide safety tools for families, educators, and public service officials. GetNetWise.org and WiredSafety.org are also effective resources for parents. Clearinghouses like the American Library Association's "Great Websites for Kids," KidSites.com, and Kids.gov provide numerous links to child-friendly sites, both informative and fun.

Using the Internet truly is an adventure with lots of potential for learning, bridging physical and cultural divides, and sharing ideas and resources. Like the intrepid Star Trek crew, we ministers want to make cyberspace exploration as safe and positive as possible!



God is in the details...

Dale Massey

A few weeks ago the church I attend had a church clean-up day on a Saturday. I've always had conflicts in the past and been unable to participate. For example, last year I had to rearrange my sock drawer that day. The year before I had to alphabetize my CD collection. So as you can tell, I've always had too many other important things to do that got in the way of my going to clean-up day.

This year I couldn't come up with any conflicting plans, so I showed up at 8 a.m. and got my assignment. There were four of us who were assigned to cover the scratches on the wooden pews as best we could with Old English wood cover, and then dust and polish all the pews. Southside Baptist has a lot of pews. I don't think I ever realized how many until I started on my first pew, and began the slow process of covering the scratches and gouges – and there were many, most caused by general wear and tear. I finally ended up on my knees, crawling across the floor trying to get to hard to reach spots. It gives you a whole different perspective of church. I never think about the pews where I sit in church. But to be there on the floor, facing the pew instead of sitting on it, rubbing a cloth across each wooden seat, and seeing, for the first time, the rich wood, the beautiful details, made the physical building



of the church real for me. These pews were close to 100 years old. That's a lot of history – a lot of people who've come through the doors here to pray, to praise and seek consolation.

It's hardly surprising that an architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, was quoted as saying, "God is in the details." That quote reverberated through my head during the day, as I scooted along the floor, covering scratches on the pews. It was a hands-on day – a very different type of worship than the usual Sunday service.

As we prepare for camp here at Passport, it's all about the details. Ordering buttons here, 10 types of t-shirts there, DVD's, film, and pom poms. Packing boxes, packing trucks. There are so many details it's mind-boggling. And yet God is in each detail. That's what is so great. Because when it all comes together, each of those details creates something much larger than we could ever imagine. All the physical details of camp help create a presence of God that young people experience in a new and exciting way. One detail plus one detail doesn't equal two in this equation, but one plus one grows exponentially into something huge that can't be quantified. So as we get bogged down in all the last minute details, remember that God is there, working in unfathomable ways.

The GLOBE

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The GLOBE is a quarterly publication of Passport, Inc.
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1-800-769-0210

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Empowering Students, Embracing the World, Extending Grace

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