

Serving

FIVE WAYS TO FORM
STRONG, LASTING AND
MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS
WITH CHURCHES

EFFECTIVE CONNECTIONS





What is it that keeps partnerships with churches strong? Well-kept facilities? Denominational ties? Low rates? Maybe not.



Our camp has discovered five ways camps and conference centers can form strong, lasting and meaningful partnerships with churches.

"The backbone of every camp ministry is a strong partnership between a heart for service in Jesus' name and a heart for those we serve," says Greg Mengarelli, executive director of UCYC (formerly United Christian Youth Camp). UCYC has worked hard to reimagine new ways to display the latter using the former. ►

WITH CHURCHES

*by Greg Mengarelli,
Amberly Neese
and Mark P. Fisher*

**"THE BACKBONE OF EVERY
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UCYC**

Over the years the team at UCYC has discovered that effective connection with churches does the following:

1. Fosters community
2. Says, "Yes"
3. Requires hunger
4. Needs humility
5. Glorifies God.

In order to help other camps and conference centers build these connections with churches that benefit both sides, our team wants to share these fundamental ideas with you.

1. Fostering Community



In order to meet the needs of guests, UCYC understands that investing in them as individuals

fosters community. Our staff connects with church leaders on social media, calls them regularly, prays for them and keep lists of the names of their spouses and kids. Several staff travel to their areas of ministry and host meetings where pastors and other church leaders can support, brainstorm and pray for one another. The value of a coffee shop meeting can not be underestimated.

Meghan James, a children's pastor from Vail Christian Church in Tucson, Ariz., reinforced this by saying, "In the bustle of activity, it can be a challenge to focus on the ends of ministry rather than the means — on the people you are hoping to reach rather than the things that need to be done. I have always been singularly impressed with UCYC's staff in this area. Not only are they consistently focused on the hundreds of kids they see each week of the summer, but they take special care to know the pastors and directors that

bring groups. Honestly, it's a kindness that I don't expect from a camp that is focused on bringing quality ministry and connection to my children, but it is the quality that keeps me returning to UCYC year after year. I feel known by camp staff; it's truly a joy to go to camp and feel like you're picking up again with old friends, and that's the type of connection that UCYC fosters."



2. Saying, 'Yes'



Connection with churches also means creatively finding a way to say, "Yes" as much as possible.

Although there are always budgetary and time limitations, UCYC strives to say, "Yes" when it is feasible. Often, systems and traditions (and sometimes

inflexibility) create reasons why "No" is easier when a customer presents a desire. The leadership of UCYC has worked hard to create a culture of "Yes."

Recently, a church was preparing one of their twice-annual youth retreats. In the past their leadership came the night before their event to set up games and elaborate sets. The week they were scheduled to arrive the camp

was being rented by another group the night they usually spent setting up. Instead of saying, "No," (which was the logical thing to do) one of the guest service representatives found a way to say "Yes." He volunteered to drive to their church (five hours round-trip), transport their set pieces and build the sets himself. The group was blown away. "Yes" can be a wonderful tool for connection. ►



EXTRA INFO

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

The importance of serving pastors and their families

UCYC (formerly United Christian Youth Camp) embraces the ideal that when shepherds are taken care of, the sheep are as well. For this reason, we offer free getaways for full-time pastors and their families.

A recent guest, Reggie Rice (Christ Church of the Valley, Peoria, Ariz.), addressed the value of this ministry to him and his family:

"Through UCYC's Pastoral Getaway program, our family has been blessed by the opportunity to take a mini-vacation to a beautiful location that reminds us of God's great work. Through the different seasons of ministry, UCYC has remained a constant in our lives for more than 10 years. Our kids have grown up at camp through my years as a youth pastor and speaker and now they are campers themselves. As we walk around the camp quiet during the off-season, we are reminded of significant moments where we saw lives changed, decisions made and fears overcome.

"Dad, remember when I first went down the zipline? Remember when I helped to lead my friend to Jesus? Remember when you got in a food fight with the other pastors and threw each other in the pool?"

"For a pastor's kid, all those moments add up to joyful memories about what it means to be a family serving the Lord. Life change happens at UCYC. When our family is able to get away, get quiet, and spend time together, we are reminded of God's goodness and the joy of serving Him. We are so grateful for UCYC's generosity to allow us to come relax, recharge and reconnect with one another."

It's obvious why we do this. Although it is an expense for the camp, UCYC feels this opportunity for pastors communicates clearly a commitment to connect with churches.

—Greg Mengarelli, Amberly Neese, and Mark P. Fisher



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 INTENTIONALLY
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 —TONI DUTY, PASTOR

3. A Hunger to Serve in Relationship



A hunger to serve is a vital component in connecting with churches. Taking the example of

Jesus described in Philippians 2, the UCYC team does their best to remember the call God placed on staff members to serve. Whether that is a clean room for guests to sleep in, well-maintained buildings, a friendly greeting on the phone, delicious food, prayerfully written curriculum, well-organized registration, creative games, summer staff who is well trained and supported or recreation that allows for bravery in a safe environment, connecting camps strive to serve.

Toni Duty, a pastor who has been bringing groups to UCYC for eight years, said how service and relationship has made the difference in connecting. “To say I value the relationship I have with the staff at UCYC would be an understatement. They go above and beyond to get to know whom they are serving and how to best serve them, even if there are 500 of us at a time. They take time to hear our needs in regards to our campers as well as our personal lives.

“Relationship means, knowing your 20th wedding anniversary will fall over your time at camp and the staff taking the time out of ‘programming’ to play your wedding song. Relationship means cheering for my child as he attempts the ‘leap of faith’ for the very first time. Relationship means sharing life’s ups and downs, whether in ministry or personally. Relationship means

intentionally connecting you with other leaders who are “in the trenches” and praying with and for you. Relationship means follow-up year-round, not just a week before your group arrives. It’s valuing your input and sharing ideas. UCYC makes you feel like you are a part of them, not just a group. I believe that it is because of relationship that UCYC has been able to partner with churches from all over to bring life change to thousands of students and adults alike. People want to be valued, they want to be known and they want to belong. UCYC does that and does it well.”

4. Humility in Failure



Connection with churches also means a willingness to admit failure once in a while. When

opening a third camp facility last summer, and due to some unforeseen construction issues, UCYC was unable to deliver on all their promises. Good connection with churches often takes the willingness to admit when we have over-promised and under-delivered. Those conversations become fodder for great growth and deeper connection.

Guest service director, Joe Zizz, was left to explain to a guest group leader when construction was not complete. “I felt horrible that we were left in this position — but my response was ‘If I were in this leader’s shoes, and I was experiencing what he was experiencing, how would I want UCYC to respond?’ I wanted to go far and above his expectations in making it right.”

Joe knew there was only one option.

Make the call. Be humble. Own it with no excuses. Apologize and make it right the best he could.

The conversation with Daniel, the youth pastor, sounded something like this:

I first want to communicate, more than anything, that we have dropped the ball.

We told you we were going to do A, B & C and here we are with only A. And for that, I want you to know, despite the many excuses that I can give you for why we can't deliver, I am so sorry for this. This is not who we normally are and this is not how we historically operate. I am sorry.

However, that being said I want to do everything in my power to make this right, so here's what I can do. Hear me out, and let me know what you think.

- 1. I cannot open any other cabins, but we do have an EMT's quarters that we can put six beds in. We will relocate our EMT and make that cabin available to you.*
- 2. We will COMP all other recreation for you that we can possibly staff during your event. It's all on us.*
- 3. We will reserve and pay for two rooms for you at a bed and breakfast just two miles down the road. That way you and your speaker can both have a quiet place to stay, pray and prepare during your event.*
- 4. Finally, please allow us to host a leadership retreat for your church at no cost to you during any time in the next year that works best for you.*

His response was this:

You have been so generous. I would like to talk to my team about all that you have offered and I want you to know this: Regardless of what we accept, please know that I am so grateful that you are so willing to make this right. Thank you so much!

Joe could almost see the tears in his eyes — and they were talking over the phone!

In the end, he took Joe up on everything except for the bed and breakfast.

Joe said, "I wish that we could have delivered what we had initially agreed on, but in the end I think we ended up with some pretty big UCYC fans. When it comes to customer service, there's nothing greater than converting someone from 'frustrated to fan.'"

5. Connection with Churches Glorifies God



The strong desire at UCYC is to let guests "see our good deeds and praise our Father in Heaven"

(Matthew 5:16). This simple but profound attitude propels the team to reimagine new ways to connect with churches. As part of the UCYC culture, pastors and their families are offered free retreats. UCYC has found that such a gift not only refreshes those that serve His Body, but also honors the One who gave the camp in the first place.

Mengarelli says, "UCYC strives to be a camp that builds the strength of our camp upon the strength of our relationships." ●



Greg Mengarelli is a Kansas farm boy at heart. A graduate of Kansas State University, Greg began his adventures in camping at Yellowstone National Park, and Angeles Crest Christian Camp in California. He has been the executive director of UCYC since 1995. Greg and his wife, Sheila, have seven children and two foster children ranging in age from 8 to 24. Reach Greg at greg@ucyc.com.



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