

Celebrating New Beginnings

September is a time of new beginnings. For young people in the Seattle/King County area September brings the start of a new school year. For the young people we serve at New Horizons, it marks the beginning of another year when they are not in school. September brings the beginning of a new year in the liturgical life of the church. For most of our youth, it marks another year they are not involved in the life of any church or faith community. September brings the end of summer vacations and a time to return to work. Sadly, for our young people it highlights the beginning of yet another year where they remain unemployed and, for most of them, unemployable.

The difference between these two experiences of the world is so extreme that it reminds me of Jesus describing the Kingdom of God to his followers as both “at hand” and “yet to come.” This is a paradox that is hard for those of us who grew up within a scientific oriented culture to accept. We live in a world of facts and numbers, we are told that something either IS or it ISN'T. You can touch it, taste it, feel it, prove it, or you can't. A young person who is living on the streets, not in school, not involved with church and not employed does not fit within our results oriented world. Their street life experience is completely outside of society's norms and therefore they are most often regarded as both a nuisance and a failure.

That's the beauty of Christ's Gospel message of hope and redemption. It calls us to look beyond the “facts and figures,” the current situations of a young person's life, and instead see the beloved child of God who dwells within. Drug and alcohol addiction, severe abuse, violence, hardness, child prostitution, and mental instability are but outward containers that hold within them a beautiful soul whom the Psalmist tells us has been known and cherished by God since long before they were born.

Our mission at New Horizons is to build and maintain relationships and trust with the young people society labels as nuisances and failures. Through love, service, and relationship we model for them the unconditional love of Jesus Christ, and help that child of God deep within begin to realize that they were created for something more and something better. On very special days we see that inner child catch a glimpse of God's love and their own potential to live in new ways. Those are the days we live for and the days when we at New Horizons celebrate as new beginnings!

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