

YEC finds a way around pandemic-imposed restrictions

By Tony Martin

Associate Editor

The two-day Youth Evangelism Challenge (YEC), a key event in Mississippi Baptist student ministry, is traditionally held each year during the school break between Christmas and New Year's Day in the A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton.

However, the popular gathering for Christian young people couldn't be held in 2020 because of restrictions dictated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the event is available in a trimmed-down format, online for the first time and featuring two speakers well-known on the subject of youth ministry.

"We realized we wouldn't be able to do it live in 2020," said Don Lum, director of the Evangelism Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, "but we wanted to continue to help meet the needs of our churches. We were able to get Richard Ross for the adult training segment of the virtual YEC. He's usually unavailable for an appearance at YEC on the usual dates. There's no one better I know of who can speak to adults, especially at this point in his career and legacy."



Ross

Ross has served since 2000 as professor of student ministry in

the Jack D. Terry School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. His entire life has focused on seeing Christ glorified in the lives of teenagers, their parents, and church youth leaders. He served as student pastor for 30 years in local churches. Overlapping part of that time were 16 years of service as the student ministry consultant at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville.

Ross prepared for investment in the lives of teenagers through his studies for bachelor, master, and Ph.D. degrees. He has also written over 20 books related to teenagers, youth leaders, and parents of teenagers. Each year he speaks and preaches in over 40 churches, conferences, and conventions.

God whispered the idea for the True Love Waits youth sexual purity movement to Ross and his friend, Jimmy Hester, and the first promises of purity were made by members of Ross' youth group in 1993. Today the movement has been embraced by 100 denominations and national student organizations in the U.S. and 100 countries.

Interest in the movement has led Ross to appear on such programs as The Today Show, Nightline, and CNN Headline News, and to be interviewed by The Washington Post, The Washington Times, the New York Times, USA Today, Newsweek, Time, Life, Seventeen, and several hundred other newspapers and magazines.

"To be able to get Richard for two sessions is pretty special. His sessions are available online for use any time," Lum said.



Morris

Wade Morris, who leads the student segment of the virtual YEC,

is another recognized speaker who Lum feels grateful to have secured. Morris is from Birmingham, Ala., and graduated from Samford University there with a degree in business finance. He also holds a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Morris served on staff at several churches before he surrendered to a full-time call to itinerant ministry. His ministry has allowed him to speak to hundreds of thousands of adults and students all over the world. Morris's speaking style is to engage the audience with sound Biblical teaching and insight to make the message of Christ relative to people in all walks of life. The combination allows Morris to share truth with those outside the church as well as deepen the faith of the believer.

Morris is the founder and producer of The Journey Bible Study Series, which walks people through the reading and understanding of books of the Bible and allows listeners to gain knowledge of the Word of God as well as a chance to apply it to their lives. He is on the road 200 days a year, and annually speaks to hundreds of thousands of people.

He started the Bible study in a Starbucks with 14 people, and it has now spread to be a personal as well as small group Bible study tool for people in America, Japan, Europe, South Korea, and other worldwide locales.

"We asked Wade to do one session for us," Lum said, "so we have three sessions available for people to use on the Evangelism Department website."

How can churches use the online teaching? "Each church will handle it differently," Lum pointed out. "The sessions are available to be used at home. Another way this might be used is a Friday night or Saturday night event at the church. We aren't advocating that students group up again just yet, but the time is coming when we can. In the meantime, the virtual

YEC sessions can be used over and over again in different ways with different groups. The sessions will be up for a while.”

The YEC sessions are available at the following links:

Adult Sessions with Richard Ross

<https://vimeo.com/msbaptists/2020yecr1>

<https://vimeo.com/msbaptists/2020yecr2>

Student Session with Wade Morris

<https://vimeo.com/msbaptists/2020yec>

The 2021 YEC is scheduled for December 27-28, in the A.E. Wood Coliseum at Mississippi College in Clinton. For more information, contact Lum at dlum@mbcb.org. The YEC is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.