youthfront NEWS
VOLUME 88 | ISSUE 2



BODY BUILDING

Strengthening KC's Churches

becoming one church with many congregations
from down to lifted up | news and updates

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YOUTHFRONT, INC.
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A Word from Mike

Becoming one church with many congregations

"Something special is happening in Kansas City."

I hear it wherever I travel to a conference. I hear it when a speaker or author comes to present here for us. The word is out that Kansas City churches and ministries are coming together more often, building relationships and working together.

Visitors express surprise at how connected our pastor community is becoming — across denominational divides and even across the Protestant-Catholic lines. On any given day at Youthfront, we might have Baptist, Catholic or Methodist clergy or volunteers joining us for midday prayer, for a retreat, for a training, or a network meeting. More importantly, they are deepening their relationships with each other — seeking each other out as resources, prayer partners, and trusted confidants.



Children's and family pastors share in community at the Holding Space gathering.

When our organization began more than 80 years ago, there was no such role as a youth pastor. We filled the void by offering programs and groups where young people could connect with God and each other. As the church evolved to add pastoral specialties like youth ministry or children's and family ministry, Youthfront shifted to working as a church-assisting organization. We're proud and humbled to come alongside churches, to understand their unique mission and congregational calling, and to help support and resource their pastors and volunteers.

There is a lot to be proud of in Kansas City, and we should add this to the list. Our churches are growing stronger, with a hard-to-miss network of ministries supporting pastors. We're truly becoming one church with many congregations. The creativity being explored through Gospel-focused collaboration is dynamically impacting our city and communities. When the church is perceived as a blessing to our city, the Good News truly becomes good news for all. This also ignites the imagination of our emerging generation of young adults who want to believe in a church that lives out the generous, life-giving way of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your prayers for this work, for your support of our staff's role in it, and for the incredible pastors and volunteers we're honored to come alongside.

Mike King, President and CEO

With Gratitude

Fore Youthfront, the annual fundraiser at Topgolf, was a success thanks in large part to our generous sponsors and event underwriters. They included the Reinhardt Family, the King Family, Burbridge Family Foundation, 1st Fruits, and the Micah and Jessica Thomas Family. Thanks to all who came out to swing for the ministry!

Awards & Honors

Youthfront President and CEO Mike King was recognized by PastorServe with its 2026 Roy Bilyeu Award, honoring lifelong achievement in youth ministry.

The Kansas City focused Christian women's giving circle Seeds of Joy selected Youthfront Pathways' Teen Parent Connect ministry for a 2026 grant award. Grantees were honored at the organization's spring gathering.

Kansas City's Nonprofit Connect recognized Youthfront News with a 2026 Philly Award in the newsletter category for nonprofit communications and marketing excellence.

New Faces at Youthfront

Since the last issue of Youthfront News, Youthfront welcomed Ryan Bronson to its full-time staff as retreat host and logistics coordinator. Bronson had previously served on Youthfront's Summer Staff.

Youthfront's New Day Camp Experience

This summer, Day Camp moved to Youthfront Camp West, offering campers an expanded and exclusive experience. With two dedicated sessions of Day Camp only, Day Camp could be the focus of all camp resources and staff. Day Campers enjoyed additional water activities and HYPE parties, and as an added convenience to parents, additional transportation options. More than 550 first through fifth graders participated in Day Camp.



Mike King received the 2026 Roy Bilyeu Award.



Teen Parent Connect honored at Seeds of Joy gathering.



A new Day Camp experience at Youthfront Camp West.



Body Building

Through pastor trainings, growing networks, church partnerships and new grants, Youthfront is investing in the future of Kansas City's churches

A youth pastor stares into a half-empty coffee mug, struggling to navigate the latest challenge in the youth group. Alone.

A children's pastor wearily sketches out a strategy to recruit new volunteers for this summer's VBS. Alone.

While there are seemingly endless resources and curriculum options for children's and youth pastors these days, the weight on them may be heavier than ever. Pastoring kids and families well in today's environment can be overwhelming, and it can lead to burnout, high turnover, and the sense of being a salmon swimming upstream. Alone.

But five national initiatives are changing that reality here in Kansas City. A wide range of pastors are engaging each other through Youthfront's leadership in those projects designed to strengthen and support the local church.

"It has been helpful to meet others and hear how our experiences are somewhat similar - even though we are in very different situations," wrote a Children's Pastor engaged in Youthfront's Strengthening Ministry with Children pastor cohort. "But it's also helpful to hear new ideas from others."

Who Pastors the Pastors?

As a church-assisting organization, Youthfront convenes trainings, networks and retreat opportunities for pastors across denominational divides. In their evaluations of these events, pastors report that meeting and hearing from other ministry leaders about what's working and what's not keeps them coming back. The most valuable takeaway? Knowing they aren't alone.

"This role was natural for us as Youthfront has a long tradition of classical Christian practices and soul care for our staff and our partners in ministry," said Mike King. "We feel called to this work - building the church by investing in pastors. Just facilitating small groups of youth or children's pastors builds deep relational connections that can help recharge them and fuel their particular ministry."

Youthfront's initiatives offer special event and cohort opportunities for pastors along with access to experiences to support parents, families and young people. From meal packing for those in need to learning and service opportunities in local neighborhoods, churches and youth groups can find formational and group experience options to meet their ministry's needs. Finally, Youthfront's theological partners provide expertise through hands-on workshops, theological training and trainings that bring the latest research to Kansas City throughout the year.

"Because their identity grows from a way of being instead of fixed tools or branded programs, Youthfront's work transcends replication," wrote Josh Packard, Ph.D., in an article for Fuller Theological Seminary that featured Youthfront's impact.

"Churches and leaders who engage with them often leave carrying attentiveness, a slower pace, and a confidence that God is already in the room. This is why Youthfront's reach extends far beyond its own gatherings: its influence lives in the habits of leaders shaped by years of shared life and faithful practice."

Shoulder to Shoulder with Local Churches

"Over decades, Youthfront has become a kind of regional home base for leaders who want to practice ministry with attentiveness, depth, and care," Packard wrote in his feature, holding up what he calls Youthfront's "long arc of theological clarity."

"Youthfront's reach across the city stems from a steady engagement and deep commitment to relational theology, which people in the community rely on," he wrote. "Relational discipleship at Youthfront flows from a way of life that has shaped a whole ecosystem of formation across Kansas City."

Youthfront's more than 200 church relationships today make it an organic hub for these national projects.

Funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. through three of its initiatives is enabling Youthfront to come alongside churches in unique ways to strengthen ministry with children, youth and young adults. This investment is deepening the spiritual experiences of kids, youth and families through a targeted expansion of Youthfront's ministries. The Lilly Endowment initiatives are the Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, the Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer Initiative and the National Youth and Young Adult Initiative on Faith and Service. One aim of these initiatives is to assist churches nationally through the learnings and outcomes from the efforts of the funded organizations.

Youthfront is a training partner in the national TENx10 initiative, led by Fuller Youth Institute, which is gathering thousands of churches, numerous denominations and hundreds of youth ministry organizations to impact 10 million young people in the next 10 years with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Above: Children's and family pastors in the Kansas City area gathered for a Rest and Renewal mini-retreat. Left: Youth pastors and volunteers attended a Youth Worker Training session presented by Dr. Andrew Root. On the cover: Dr. Josh Packard shared ministry insights at a workshop for pastoral staff.

In addition, Fuller Theological Seminary's RISE initiative equips youth pastors and ministry leaders to integrate emotional health into spiritual formation, ultimately helping teenagers to experience holistic spiritual maturity. In partnership with PastorServe, Youthfront received a RISE grant to support senior and youth pastors' emotional and spiritual health.

"These are national investments in the local Kansas City church," King adds. "There is so much collaboration now among ministries and churches locally, that before long pastors in every corner of our city will feel and benefit from the support."

Three national scholars are serving as theological and ministry advisors to Youthfront for these initiatives. Each is providing content, coaching and insight to pastors along with hosting Kansas City-based trainings and dialogue opportunities throughout the year.



Andrew Root, Ph.D.
The Carrie Olson Baalson Professor of Youth and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary, Root is a pastoral and practical theologian who researches, writes, and lectures on ministry in a secular age, younger generations and faith formation. This fall, Root presented "Anxious about a Generation" to more than 50 youth pastors and ministry volunteers gathered at Youthfront.



Meredith Miller, M.Div.
Miller is a pastor and author with decades of focus on kids and family ministry and at Fuller Youth Institute. She offered a session at Youthfront this fall for more than 30 children's and family pastors, workshopping their toughest questions and challenges. She also participated in Youthfront's Children's Pastor Cohort autumn retreat, involving pastors representing a dozen churches across the theological and denominational spectrum.



Josh Packard, Ph.D.
Co-founder of Future of Faith, Packard is one of the foremost experts in the spiritual lives of modern American youth, and an accomplished researcher in the sociology of religion and new forms of religious expression. He has authored numerous books and articles in both popular and academic outlets. Packard hosted a roundtable discussion this fall for Youthfront staff on his latest research on youth ministry shaped by Sacred Listening practices.

from down to *lifted up*

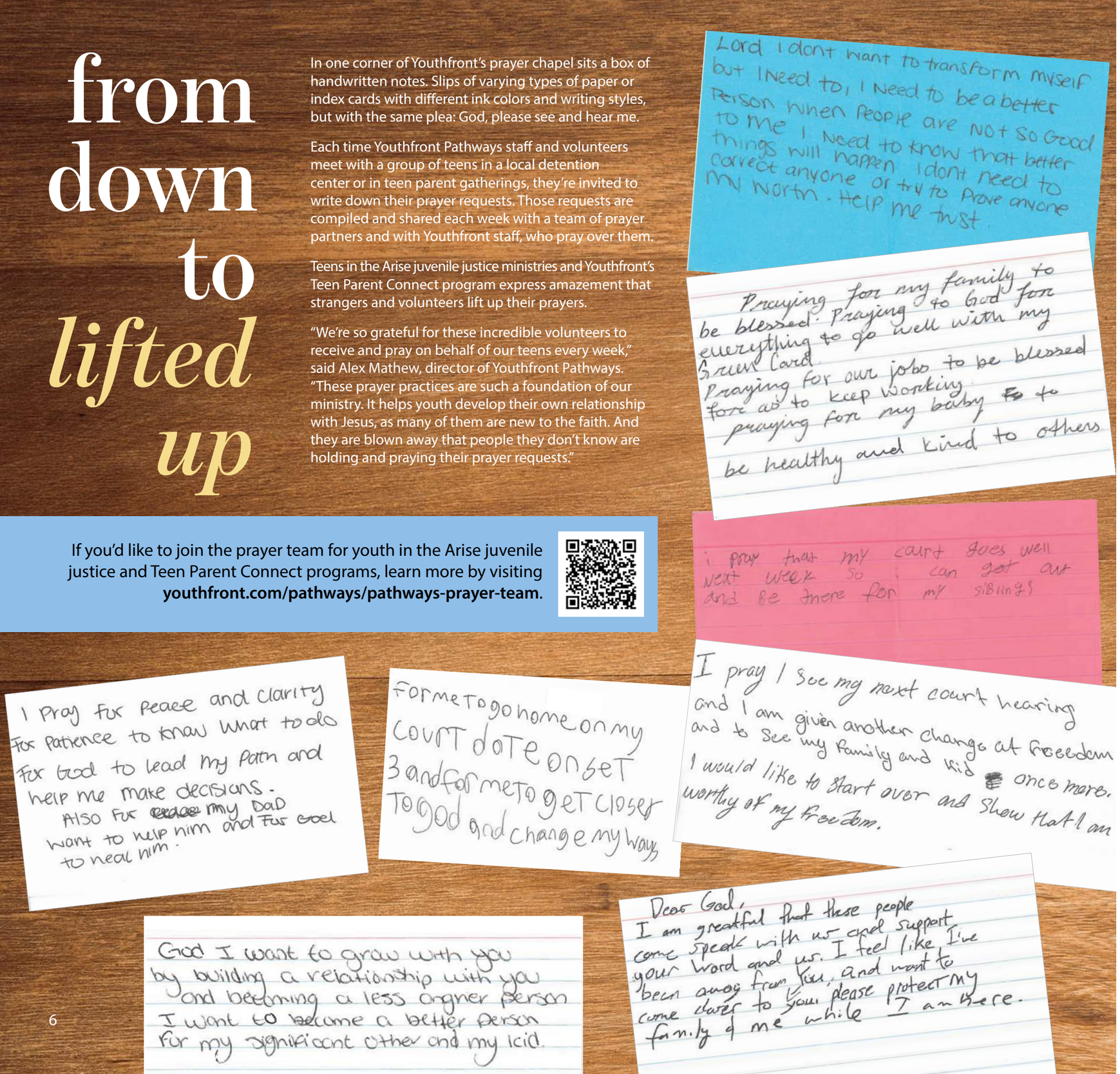
In one corner of Youthfront's prayer chapel sits a box of handwritten notes. Slips of varying types of paper or index cards with different ink colors and writing styles, but with the same plea: God, please see and hear me.

Each time Youthfront Pathways staff and volunteers meet with a group of teens in a local detention center or in teen parent gatherings, they're invited to write down their prayer requests. Those requests are compiled and shared each week with a team of prayer partners and with Youthfront staff, who pray over them.

Teens in the Arise juvenile justice ministries and Youthfront's Teen Parent Connect program express amazement that strangers and volunteers lift up their prayers.

"We're so grateful for these incredible volunteers to receive and pray on behalf of our teens every week," said Alex Mathew, director of Youthfront Pathways. "These prayer practices are such a foundation of our ministry. It helps youth develop their own relationship with Jesus, as many of them are new to the faith. And they are blown away that people they don't know are holding and praying their prayer requests."

If you'd like to join the prayer team for youth in the Arise juvenile justice and Teen Parent Connect programs, learn more by visiting **youthfront.com/pathways/pathways-prayer-team**.



Save the Date!

SOMETHING TO EAT KC

A City-Wide Meal Packing Event

2.27.27

Make plans to join us in February for a fun day of service to help our neighbors facing food insecurity. All ages are welcome!

PCC is an affiliate of Youthfront



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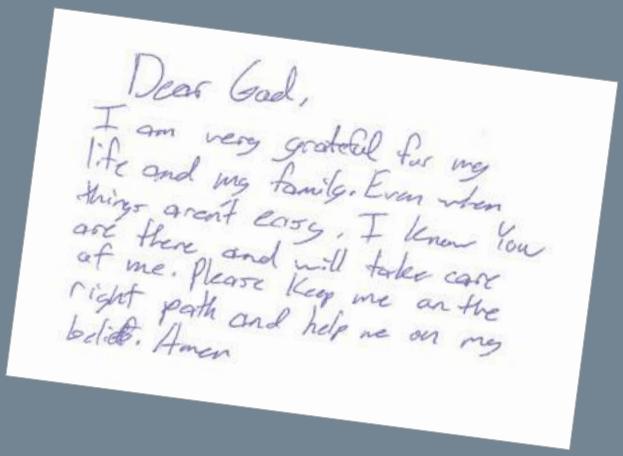
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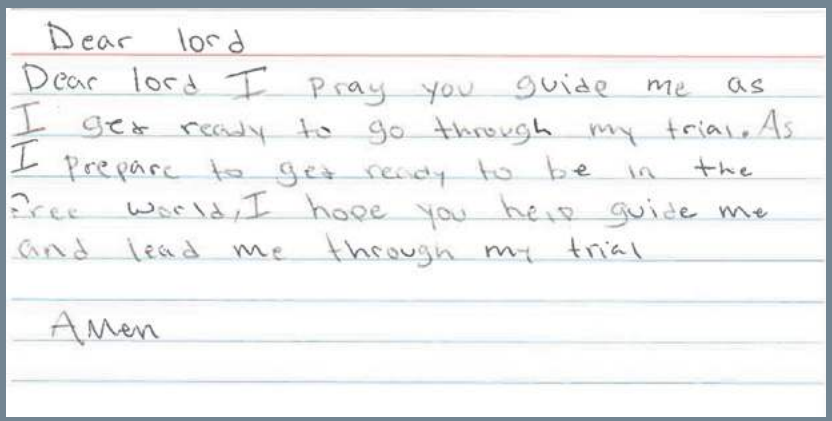
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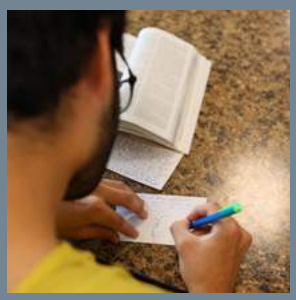
How can you pray for the teens in our ministry?

We're so glad you asked.

Youthfront Pathways serves teens in tough situations through its programs for teen parents and justice-involved youth. At each gathering, teens are invited to share prayer requests and are encouraged to know that people they've never even met are praying with them for the concerns on their hearts. We invite you to join in prayer for these young people.


Dear God,
I am very grateful for my life and my family. Even when things aren't easy, I know You are there, and will take care of me. Please keep me on the right path and help me on my belief. Amen


Dear lord
Dear lord I pray you guide me as I get ready to go through my trial. As I prepare to get ready to be in the free world, I hope you help guide me and lead me through my trial
Amen





Read more on page 6.