

**Developing Youth Groups for the Twenty-First Century**

by

David M. Stoltz

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Date:

This field project paper has been examined and approved.

Review Committee:

---

Dr. John E. Meyer, Chair

---

Dr. Robert Klindworth

---

Kenneth Kremer

Approved:

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John Meyer  
Director of Graduate Studies

### **Abstract**

Teens in the world face many challenges and struggles. When it comes to how the church works with teens, many specifically think about the youth groups and all the activities they do. However, sometimes the teens outgrow what youth groups provide. Many of the youth groups today have old programs for a new age of teens. This study examined how all the youth from our congregation can be involved in the St. Lucas youth programs. The findings revealed we are missing a whole demographic of teens. St. Lucas youth programs need to provide more opportunities for our youth to be in Bible study and to encourage members of the youth group every day in their walk with God.

This project revealed a need to reach out to teens in the public school sector and increase Bible study opportunities. The plan to achieve these goals includes creating a youth group that works with public school students and start a weekly Bible study. The program will focus on providing good leadership and mentoring for our teens and offering programs that will encourage spiritual growth and service opportunities.

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## **Part I: The Purpose**

### **Introduction**

Do contemporary youth groups reflect the needs and interests of today's young people? My desire is to strengthen or reinvent the St. Lucas Youth Group by building a stronger spiritual and service foundation for our youth that will carry them through their teenage years and beyond. I would like to see the Youth Group respond to the spiritual needs of today's pre-teens and teens.

### **Evidence of the Problem**

When I was an adolescent, youth group was fun. It was based on the three G's: games, goofiness, and God. We sang simple songs. We played nutty games. The teaching time was brief but meaningful to teens. I loved it, and it attracted a lot of boys. Morrow (2011) described the youth group philosophy recognizing that church services were sometimes boring, but youth group was always a kick. Youth ministry founded upon games, pizza, theme parks, and short devotions often miss the point. Our task is to make disciples, not to be cool and gather huge crowds. There are a few ministries that spend their time having pointless fun, but many have matured into teaching the Word to a unique segment of the church's population

In today's world it is not as easy to have a clear vision of what youth groups should be.

Boshers (1997) explained,

The distinguishing characteristic between merely maintaining a youth group and building a dynamic student ministry is the existence of a clear,

compelling vision. Vision is the God-given ability to imagine an attractive and exciting future for a group of people and uniting them for a common purpose. (pp.110-111)

“Too many youth groups are activity-driven with little thought given to the purpose of most activities. Vision brings purpose to those activities and give students direction for the future.” (Boshers, 1997, p.72)

Within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) youth groups seem to be falling short of the needs of the twenty-first century teen. Speaking of WELS youth groups, D. Kuske (1993) stated:

...Although the majority of congregations have a youth group, 2 out of 5 do not. In addition it is noted that the majority of those who do have a youth group meet only once a month. Add to this the fact that many of those who have meetings once a month commented that only a small percentage of their young people attend the youth meetings regularly, or that they were having a hard time keeping the youth group going. (p.1)

While it was written more than two decades ago, Kuske’s analysis remains a fairly accurate picture of the status quo in 2014.

While the focus of the Bret Goodman Marketing study for the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship is on why young people leave WELS, it also shared three recommendations that have implications for youth groups. The study shared three recommendations to strengthen the level of commitment among young people and keep them from leaving altogether. First, the WELS needs to lobby parents more aggressively,

communicating the critical role they play in their children's future WELS relationship. Second, the WELS pastors and congregation leaders need to better tune in to the needs and interests of their young adult members. The third recommendation was to place a greater emphasis on youth groups which appear to be losing their effectiveness and meaning.

Why aren't young people involved with youth groups? Why aren't youth impacting the lives of peers and congregation members that they serve? How can a youth group be structured to support and encourage the twenty-first century young person? As Christians we need to find a root that keeps the youth of the twenty first century grounded in and through the Word of God. It is important to get youth grounded in a firm foundation so the distractions of the world and today's secular living do not take them away from the one thing needful. That is where our youth groups need to modify what they are doing. Teens today need to feel that they are making a difference in the world. Today's teens are not interested in youth groups for the same reasons as teens were 30-50 years ago. The youth group has to stay up-to-date with the technology driven world that we live in. Reaching youth on their level is a must if we are to have any hope of retaining them in our congregations.

### **Project Purpose**

The youth at St. Lucas lose interest or become inactive in our youth activities after confirmation. The further youth move away from church sponsored activities like youth group following confirmation, the further they move away from church. This is true whether the student attends a public or parochial school. It is important to make our teens and pre-teens feel welcomed, important, and involved in our congregation. Many



of the methods of the past do not interest the youth of today. It is important to find ways that our youth can be drawn to the both pre-teen and teen groups.

The project's purpose is to reinvent the St. Lucas youth group for twenty-first century Lutheran youth. The following principles will guide the study:

- adult involvement
- modeling
- active participation
- service to the church and
- service to the community.

## **Part II: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The following literature review provides information on programs that are working and how those models can be applied to future planning at St. Lucas.

### **The Benefits of a Teenager Joining a Church Youth Group**

Our youth are the future of the church, so it is important for the church to get involved in ministry for this unique segment of the congregation. Involvement includes training and opportunities to grow in faith.

One of the main reasons we want our teenagers to join the youth group is to strengthen their faith. “Though the atmosphere of most church youth groups is lighthearted and focuses on fun, there is a certain amount of time spent at each meeting discussing various Bible lessons and fundamentals of faith. This serves to strengthen the teenager's faith, which in turn brings the entire family closer” (Riggs, 2010, p.1). Once this process of faith strengthening becomes familiar, our young people will begin to share what they have learned with others. The church now has its youth reaching out with the greatest message of all.

Youth groups can often have a positive benefit in the lives of young people from non-Christian homes. The youth group can represent a real opportunity for evangelism and outreach, if the unbelieving youth can be brought in and there is sufficient wise adult leadership to reach them. (Crank, 2011, p. 3)

Today's teens also need Christian fellowship. When young people share the same faith they can enjoy each other's company from a different perspective.

From concerts to movies, trips to the beach and arts and crafts projects, youth groups give its members a chance to have wholesome fun with other like-minded teens. At a time when peer pressure is so very strong and temptations to engage potentially harmful behavior for recreation, a church youth group can be an oasis for teenagers. This can give parents much needed peace of mind during this critical age. (Riggs, 2010, p. 1)

A third benefit to teenager youth groups is the atmosphere that is created. The Church wants our teens to be in a safe and positive environment where they can be nurtured in the Word with other teens that are acceptant of all the differences.

Members are encouraged to make new friends and enjoy themselves with other kids they have known for ages in a safe and positive place where no drugs, alcohol or inappropriate behavior is condoned. You will take comfort in the fact that your son or daughter is spending their free time in a positive place where negative and dangerous behavior is simply not tolerated. (Riggs, 2010 p. 1)

Another benefit of the youth group is not just found in the four walls of the meeting room. It extends out into the world. The church sees the benefit of youth in the community. Teens today have a real desire to make a difference and be involved in a cause. Why not have them start in their own community?

From car washes to bake sales, to planting a community garden and cleaning up the local parks; church youth groups often organize and take part in projects that better the community and its residents. Not only will your teenager come away

from these activities with a sense of pride and achievement, parents cannot help but be inspired to take more of an active role in the community. You just may find yourself planting spring bulbs or clearing away litter at the local playground yourself. This shared goal and positive activity cannot help but bring you and your teenager closer. (Riggs, 2010 p. 2)

Finally, teens need good role models in a world that can be filled with poor ones. The leadership of the youth group can provide important guidance, support, and leadership in shaping the youth of today.

Teenagers tend to tune out their parents, but listen far more intently when another adult they admire and respect offer words of wisdom and advice. You can be sure that the leaders of your teenager's youth group are reinforcing all the basic rules of living a good and honest life to its members. While you have surely spoken to your teenage son or daughter about the dangers of risky behavior such as drugs, alcohol and engaging in sexual activity at a young age, the leaders of the church youth group can reinforce those important warnings regarding such reckless behavior. This added reinforcement can hopefully reduce your anxiety about your teenager's behavior, and what choices they will make when facing these circumstances. (Riggs, 2010, p. 2)

### **What is wrong with Youth Groups?**

Youth groups have problems with peer influence/pressure, being too worldly, and lacking Biblical support for youth members (Crank, 2011).

An August 2011, USA Today article stated, "... one in four teens now participate in church youth groups, considered the hallmark of involvement; numbers have been flat since 1999. Other measures of religiosity-prayer, Bible reading and going to church- lag as well according to Barna Group, a Ventura, California, an evangelical research company" (USA Today, 2011 p. 1).

The sad fact is that a growing number of our confirmands are getting little or no spiritual nurture in the years right after they are confirmed. Fewer and fewer are attending church and communion, and only a very small percentage is involved in Bible study in a youth group or youth Bible class (Kuske, 1993).

### **All Youths are Not the Same**

So much is changing during adolescent years that many teenagers wonder when life will be normal. Most people would agree that adolescence is a strange, confusing time of life; a transitional season in which one is neither child nor adult (Boshers, 1997. p. 83).

Some youths know what they believe, have strong convictions, are not concerned about acceptance, and are fairly well prepared to stand alone. These may find it easy to become leaders and influence the group in a positive direction. Others will more likely be followers and will find it harder to stand against the group or to boldly challenge what they are doing. Not all of this is a matter of training and maturity. Inborn personality also makes a lot of difference in how much they want to please and be accepted and thus how hard it is for them to stand alone. (Crank, 2011, p. 2)

### **Keys to a Growing Youth Church**

Most youth groups need growth in order to survive. Incoming youth group members are needed to replace out-going older youth. “The way to growth is not by focusing on growth itself; that only leads to gimmicks, like free gold fish for bringing someone to Sunday school. The way to church growth is through the people, specifically young people” (Ciocco, 1999, p. 1). This means getting the youth involved in the youth ministry. Such involvement starts at the top with the youth pastor or leader. It starts with delegation and choosing to whom the leader should delegate. Finally, a good leader motivates those to whom he delegates. “As these young people move into their own standing in the main church, they will be prepared for the responsibilities of membership because they have been accepting responsibility all along” (Youth pastor.com).

### **Today’s Youth Group Ministry**

Today youth group ministry needs to have a purpose and be relevant to the youth. Today’s youth ministry needs to incorporate the Word, service, participation, opportunities, guidance, and ownership. Johnson (2008) recommends that youth ministry have the following seven parts. 1) Topical Bible studies and lessons which include application steps. 2) Opportunities for mission trips and service projects. 3) opportunities to participate, not just attend. 4) exploring faith through case studies, discussion, and role-playing. 5) opportunities to ask questions and share doubts. 6) ownership of the ministry-it is student-owned, not adult-owned. 7) living out their faith in the real world (Johnson, 2008).

“Students come into your ministry with a big box full of knowledge but don’t necessarily know what to do with it and are beginning to ask if it even matters. One of our roles is to put handles on their box of information so they can pick it up and carry it with them as they live out their daily lives” (Johnson, 2008, p. 98). Leaders and parents need to make things relevant in the lives of teens, especially when it is what they have been brought up believing in. By making that knowledge in teen ministry relevant assures them that it is used in everyday life and is not left behind at the youth meeting or activity.

### **Relevant Middle School Ministry**

When youth leaders think of youth groups we can look at the younger youth members as having a different perspective than the older members. The middle school ministry is result of this factor. Youth group’s younger members can often feel intimidated by older youth members. Sometimes creating two separate youth ministries can be more beneficial than putting all teens together. A middle or junior high ministry can serve the pre-teen to early teens and the youth group can serve the high school age teens.

Keeping the middle school age (seventh and eighth grade) kids in mind we want to create a safe and friendly environment. “Middle school students need a safe place where it doesn’t matter what brand of pants you wear. A fun middle/junior high ministry is one where adult leaders create an atmosphere that allows students to be real-to be themselves. Middle student students need a place that values the real, not the image” (Johnson, 2008, pp.96-97). We need to focus the middle school ministry on the message

of Christ. Creating an environment where middle school students can grow in their faith and feel welcomed into the group and church is essential. “The effective middle school/junior high ministry is one that takes purposeful steps to create an atmosphere that allows students to experience the relevance of Christ in their lives” (Johnson, 2008, pp.96-97).



### **Part III. DESIGN**

The project's purpose is to reinvent the St. Lucas youth group for the twenty-first century Lutheran youth. The purpose will be accomplished by using the findings of this study to create a working mission statement, vision, and future expansion plan.

First, I defined what we saw as challenges for our current youth group. I started by asking the youth what they would like to see from their youth group. My goal was to find out where they felt changes needed to be made with the current structure. This task was accomplished by having the youth group members break out into smaller groups of five to eight students to discuss what was important to them and what they want the youth group to do in the future. I sat down with five small groups which consisted of 48 youths. I interviewed them and recorded their answers. I wanted to have some groups be all LES students and some non-LES students because I thought they would be more open when they were among their peers. Based on the demographics of our congregation's youth group I needed to meet with about eight to ten groups. The small groups met after school and after church or in specific group meetings for about thirty to forty-five minutes, depending on additional input from youth members. My goal was to meet with at least 80% of the youth in our church. Before meeting with them I sought their consent to ask them questions about our current plan of youth group and was going to be looking for ideas for the future plan of the youth group. Doughnuts or pizza, depending on the time of day, were provided for the youth to eat at the group meetings and bowling outings. I recorded each session on audio tape and had students record answers to questions on the survey (Appendix A). I used a constant comparison method to analyze the focus group data, and I found many themes and ideas that were common to

both groups and (LES and non-LES responses [Appendix B]). The list of questions can be found in Appendix A, and responses can be found in Appendix B.

The next step was to talk with our youth leaders as see if our youth leadership felt we were leading our youth into the twenty –first century. In our meetings we discussed the findings of the youth group sessions, and we discussed if we indeed were providing for the teens spiritual and emotional welfare. The leaders used the model programs that were seen as successful as a suggestion for change in our program. Some of the models that have shown success would be Johnson (2008) and Boshers (1997). Boshers lays out the purpose of youth ministry. The plan is to look into educating leaders by reviewing literature on youth in the twenty-first century, using the book “Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry.” Based on that book review youth leaders will be able to provide our youth group with a program that will take our teens into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Third, I collaborated with our youth to help them understand what twenty-first century youth groups are capable of doing. In this meeting I shared the various service needs such as mentoring other teens and pre-teens, mission trip opportunities, leading in worship, working within our community, volunteering at our school, participating in Bible study, and other service opportunities that they have. It was my hope that the leadership team would see that youth ministry of today is different than the youth ministry of the past. In the same meeting we discussed establishing a mission statement and developing a vision plan that would incorporate the needs of our youth group. The mission statement they came up with is “Training teens and others to walk in the cross of

Christ.” The idea behind the mission statement was that as teens we need to take up our crosses by growing our faith and letting our light shine for Christ.

Finally, I helped the youth create a group that is mission oriented and purpose driven. Both mission and purpose depends on the results of more teen meetings and leadership training sessions; but, for now, the teens need to take ownership in their mission and purpose. As past leaders we need to develop future youth leaders and student leaders that will function as an action group in carrying out the mission and vision plan. As future leaders continue to exhibit great leadership qualities and build on those qualities, those leaders will strive to train the student leaders to take ownership of the youth group by educating them through student-leaders training sessions.

## **Part IV: Implementation**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this project is to reinvent how we are doing our youth group and establish a pre-teen group for the twenty-first century. The goal is to create a working mission statement, vision, and future expansion plan. This chapter will discuss the findings of the small groups and how those findings translated to our leaders and helped establish a pre-teen and youth group for the future. It is important to make our teens and pre-teens feel welcomed, important, and involved in our congregation. The program will focus on updating what we do with our youth by providing for the needs and desires of the twenty-first century teen. This change will then provide leadership and mentoring for our pre-teens, teens, and equip them to become solid leaders and parents at St. Lucas or in other churches, schools, and communities.

### **Findings**

I sat down with five small groups which consisted of 48 youths. I interviewed them and recorded their answers. The groups were broken down into 12 youths that did not participate in the youth group at all and 36 that had participated on various different levels over the years. Some of the young people I interviewed were public school students some were Lutheran high school students, two were Luther Preparatory School students. Twelve students who did not participate did not attend our Lutheran grade school. Results of the study are found in Appendix B. I recorded the interviews on audio tape, and also had the students fill in the answers on the actual printed questionnaire before giving their answers verbally. I then compiled the answers on a single document

using various tables and bold printing answers that could not be put in table form (Appendix B).

The study revealed some interesting and insightful observations from the young people who I interviewed. For example, I learned that they had a desire for becoming involved in outreach and service to the church and community. One teen said, “We see so many people that need help and assistance with everyday jobs around the house and taking time to help can benefit everyone involved.” Another teen commented, “Our mission field is in our own community and we can bring the gospel to many by taking the time to help out.” These statements seemed to support what Riggs(2010) stated:

From car washes to bake sales, to planting a community garden and cleaning up the local parks; church youth groups often organize and take part in projects that better the community and its residents. Not only will your teenager come away from these activities with a sense of pride and achievement, parents cannot help but be inspired to take more of an active role in the community. You just may find yourself planting spring bulbs or clearing away litter at the local playground yourself. This shared goal and positive activity cannot help but bring you and your teenager closer. ( p. 2)

The group had strong desires for fellowship and information that could create stronger bonds for all youth in the congregation. “I enjoy the opportunity to see other teens that you might not get to see much because of our busy schedules,” said one young man. One girl reflected by saying “I enjoy the fellowship we have before and after meetings.” Again, Riggs mad a similar observation (2010):

Members are encouraged to make new friends and enjoy themselves with other kids they have known for ages in a safe and positive place where no drugs, alcohol or inappropriate behavior is condoned. You will take comfort in the fact that your son or daughter is spending their free time in a positive place where negative and dangerous behavior is simply not tolerated. (p. 1)

There was also a desire to get as many youth involved in our congregation both public school and Lutheran school. A new youth group member commented, , “I think we need to get more of the public school teens involved in our group because they need good Christian fun instead of negative influences that they see every day.” I was reminded of the twelve teens that never attended our LES and how we could get them involved. One day I was brainstorming with my pastors in our weekly meeting when we were talking about the void of public school teens that we no longer see in church. We were thinking about ways to get them to church when I mentioned that maybe they should start with our youth group. We needed to find a connection that could get them involved in their congregation. This brought about an idea to use the current public high school student that did attend our LES to try and get the students that didn’t attend our LES students involved. How could we get more involved in spreading the gospel to our congregation and community by using as many youth as possible? This inspired the new youth group direction.

We also considered new ideas for bringing our teens together more frequently and to more effectively satisfy their spiritual needs many craved. The teens said, “We need more Bible study opportunities.” “The sad fact is that a growing number of our confirmands are getting little or no spiritual nurture in the year’s right after they are

confirmed. Fewer and fewer are attending church and communion, and only a very small percentage is involved in Bible study in a youth group or youth Bible class” (Kuske, 1993). Topical Bible studies and lessons which include application steps, exploring faith through case studies, discussion, role-play, and opportunities to ask questions, share doubts, and live their faith in the real world (Johnson, 2008) is important in the teen’s spiritual journey. Our proposed solution was to add a teen Bible study during our Family Bible Hour on Sunday. We will give a weekly text to teens reminding them about the Bible study and encouraging them to bring a friend.

Finally, I hope to inform and encourage teens by setting up a daily text of encouragement. It could be scripture related, inspirational, or just encouraging them to stay connected to Christ. This daily Word could continue to keep the TLC group in front of them. It was stated earlier:

Teenagers tend to tune out their parents, but listen far more intently when another adult they admire and respect offer words of wisdom and advice. You can be sure that the leaders of your teenager's youth group are reinforcing all the basic rules of living a good and honest life to its members. While you have surely spoken to your teenage son or daughter about the dangers of risky behavior such as drugs, alcohol and engaging in sexual activity at a young age, the leaders of the church youth group can reinforce those important warnings regarding such reckless behavior. This added reinforcement can hopefully reduce your anxiety about your

teenager's behavior, and what choices they will make when facing these circumstances. (Riggs, 2010, p. 2)

### **Plan**

Teens need to better understand their purpose in the church (St. Lucas) and their community, they need to see that they can make a long-term difference in the church's ministry. This section outlines a plan for the teen program at St. Lucas Lutheran Church and School.

Our current Youth Group goes by the name of TLC (Teens Living in Christ). We currently have a strong group of members who have attended our Lutheran Elementary School. We have determined that it is important to integrate and involve our public school families in the program as well. In order to do this, we plan to create opportunities for our public school teens to work with our congregation's youth, hoping to engage them in our youth group. Public high school youth are able to get release time for doing community service. We are planning to offer to high school kids, an opportunity to assist our Lutheran Elementary School, giving them a new connection to our church through our school program.

The 12 students who were interviewed would like to see a school teen mentoring group that helps out in our Lutheran school. The focus this group wanted to incorporate will be a student-run program, not a leader-run program. They even decided to name their group, calling it KPS which stands for Kewaskum Peers for Students.

Vision



While the original intent of the KPS (Kewaskum Peers for Students) group will be a peer mentoring group for the younger students at St. Lucas, in the future it will also focus on service opportunities in the school, church, and community. The hope is that this approach will get more public school students involved in the TLC group. We want to take Jesus outside the walls of St. Lucas. Below are several areas of focus KPS would like to be involved:

- 1) Who May Be a KPS member? (I plan to set up an application for those who want to be part of KPS.)

The character of the individual will be a high priority in being selected as a KPS member. The applicant must also understand his or her commitment to the program. The applicant must be accountable and able to serve in this capacity. At the same time, we hope to recruit students with a range of abilities and talents. KPS members will not be expected to participate in every ministry of KPS. There will be many other activities and ministries to become involved in. When they do commit to a ministry, however they will be expected to be involved. The leader will work with the members to set guidelines and boundaries. The leader will also monitor the academic progress of students to make sure they are not stretched too thin and can maintain a good balance between church activities and their work at school.

- 2) Peer Mentoring Ministry

- a. Assist new and returning students on the first day of school.
- b. Develop a relationship with the younger students selected by the KPS team.

- c. Celebrate accomplishments with the students in their group (birthdays, academic success, extracurricular events, etc.)

3) Future St. Lucas Ministry

- a. Work with Mr. Stoltz as a morning greeter. A rotation of one KPS members a day would stand at the front door of school to welcome students as they enter the school (High school Starts 10 minutes after St. Lucas starts).
- b. Establish a Big Brother/Big Sister relationship with assigned students at St. Lucas. Invite them to attend various events that take place at St. Lucas.
- c. Work as a door holder and farewell bidder as students leave the school at night.
- d. Work with teachers on reading morning devotions in their classrooms.
- e. Work with administrative assistant on yearbook, stuffing bulletins, copying newsletters, and stocking paper supply shelves.
- f. Work with pastors on being cantors, ushers, soloists, bell ringers, and other church related activities.
- g. Work with Pre-school director on cleaning toys, games, and other manipulative used in the classroom.
- h. Assist TLC on helping with Easter Breakfast.
- i. Work as Greeters before and after church.

j. Assist with Sunday school.

k. Assist with Vacation Bible School.

4) Faith in Action Community Projects (These projects are done by TLC and KPS members to reach out to the community. They are done at various times in the course of the year.)

a. Work on hanging flyers for Easter Services. (Work with Evangelism Committee)

b. Assist congregation on “National Night Out” activities run by our congregation.

c. Assist with “Party on the Pavement” booth.

d. Assist with the St. Lucas booth at “Celebrating Families Day” at the County Fairgrounds.

e. Assist the TLC group with the Adopt a Highway program.

5) KPS Leadership Team- will to work with the leadership team in making key decisions for the group. A team of four to five KPS students are selected to be part of the Leadership Team. This team has several responsibilities and is under the direct guidance of Mr. Stoltz. Responsibilities include:

a. Assist Mr. Stoltz in keeping the vision of KPS alive and growing.

- b. Organizing and accomplishing the work associated with their area of ministry.
  - c. Be accountable for setting goals and doing everything to the best of their ability in accomplishing them.
  - d. Monthly meetings will be held as well as making necessary meetings for the entire KPS group.
- 6) Spiritual Growth will always be a concentrated effort of KPS.
  - a. Weekly Bible study.
  - b. Weekly devotions.
  - c. Work with team members in reaching out to others in proclaiming the gospel.
- 7) Social Activities (KPS members will also be doing social activities)
  - Pizza parties, Brewer Games, bowling, game night, and other activities will be enjoyed by members of KPS along with TLC.

## **Chapter V: Reflective Essay**

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of the field project is based on the evaluation of the current youth group. The results of the field project led me to make decisions about how to update and change our youth group to serve the teens and allow them to serve others. This field project gave me experience in reviewing literature that helped me become familiar with effective youth group practices and enabled me to benefit our youth group with the knowledge I gained.

### **Recommendations**

When looking at our youth group of the past, we saw how outdated the group had become. We saw how the group was not servicing the teens and their needs. With this field study we have gained knowledge on how to reach many more of the teens in our congregation. We have gained an understanding of how we can provide effective spiritual guidance, as well as, better service opportunities for all of our youth. I believe the youth leaders can communicate and encourage our youth to take ownership in their youth group. They can lead other pre-teens and teens in our church, community, and families. This will benefit our youth and has the potential to become a vital part of the mission outreach to the community and beyond. Future research projects could look into how we can start our younger youth in a pre-teen group. By building up the pre-teen group it could become a natural feeder into the teen youth group and create a stronger program for meeting future needs.

I anticipate sharing the information from this study with my youth leaders, as well as, our pre-teens and teens. The sharing of this information could be passed on through youth rallies and youth leader seminars.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Questions to Ask Youth**

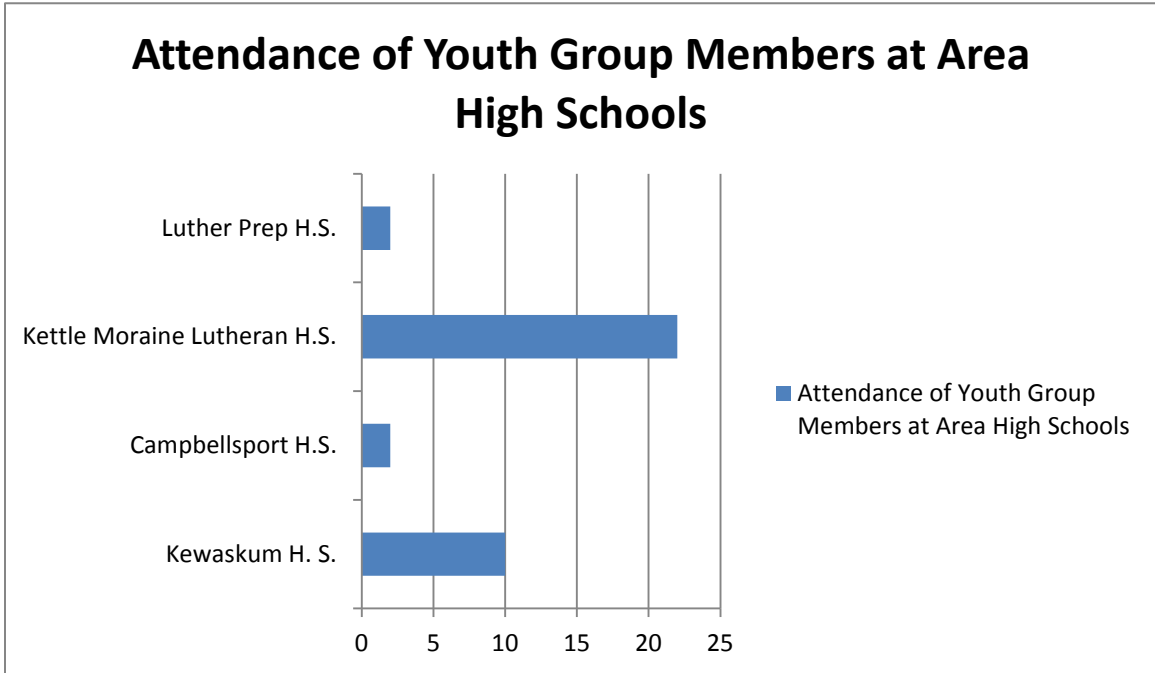
1. School Attended (group)
2. Current involvement in Youth Group (Teens Living in Christ) YES NO
3. If yes to #2 What do you see as being the strength of TLC?
4. If yes to #2 What do you see as being the weakness of TLC?
5. What can you see as a change you would like to see in the future to TLC?
6. What would make you want to encourage others to be part of TLC?
7. If no to #2 Why are you not involved with TLC?
8. If no to #2 What would or could be done to make you want to be part of the TLC group?
9. Additional thought or ideas for the direction of youth within our congregation?



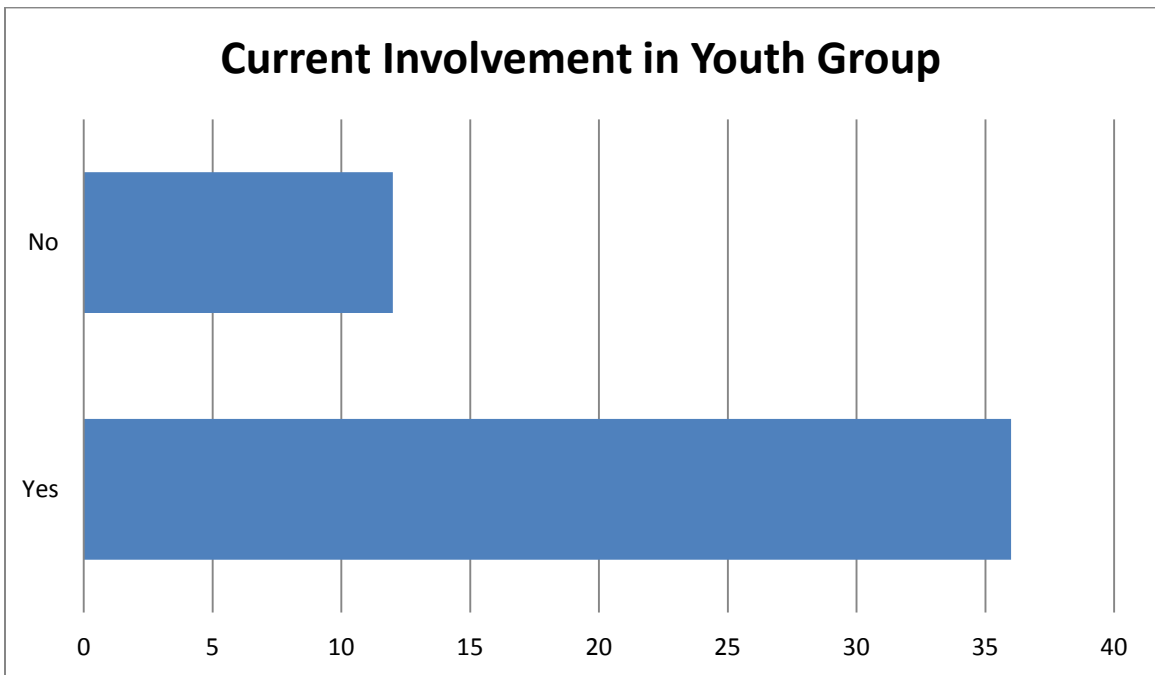
**Appendix B**

**Results of Questions to Youth**

1. School Attended (group)



2. Current involvement in Youth Group (Teens Living in Christ) YES NO



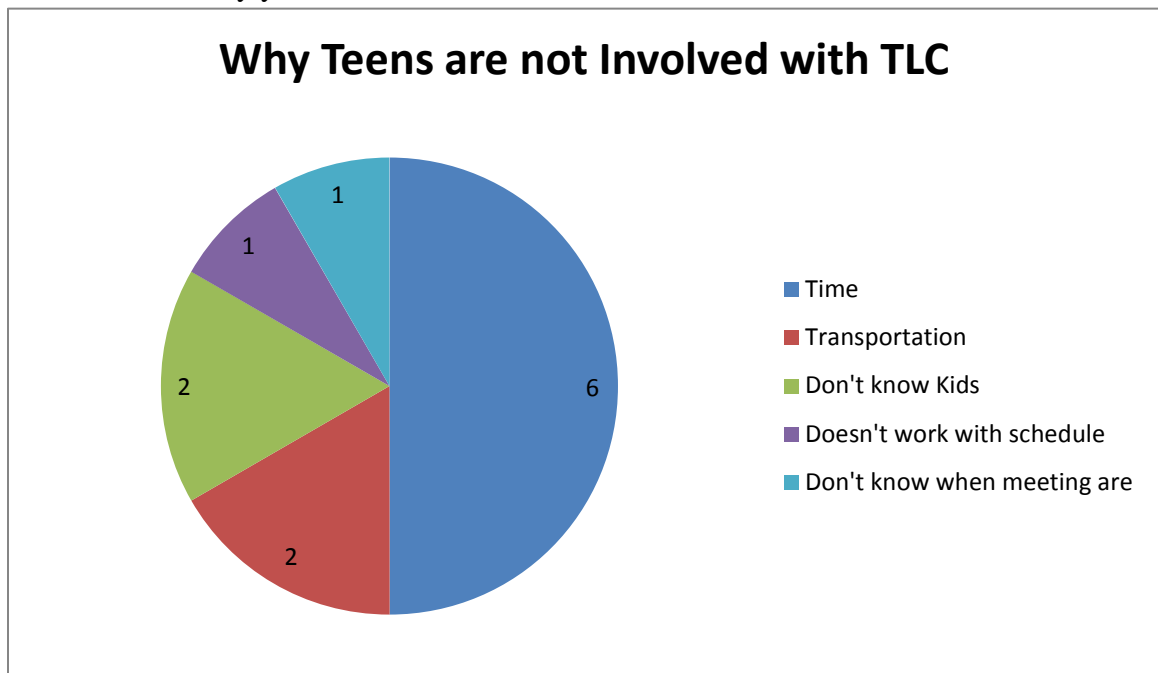
3. If yes to #2 What do you see as being the strength of TLC? (Bold lettering is all the responses given by teens) **Bible Study, Food, fellowship, caring for others, Gods Word, worship, having fun, getting to know people, get to see other teens that you might not get to see much, hangout, energy, willingness, a chance to grow in my faith, spend time with peers, do fun activities, getting teens together who are all of the same faith,**

4. If yes to #2 What do you see as being the weakness of TLC? (Bold lettering is all the responses given by teens) **None, attendance, we don't do many evangelizing activities, inability to attend all the events, mission outreach activities, getting new people, dates are short notice, need better way of communicating events, more community events, more activities**

5. What can you see as a change you would like to see in the future to TLC? (Bold lettering is all the responses given by teens) **No changes, getting more people involved, more bible study opportunities, more outings, more fun things, new people, more food, some evangelizing activities, more community service, more teens involved with work days or volunteering, more activities and fellowship, better activities,**

6. What would make you want to encourage others to be part of TLC? (Bold lettering is all the responses given by teens) **The fun we have while we learn about God, activities and fellowship, we have fun, we can express our faith as a group of teens, having more activities, it is fun and you meet new people, getting to know new people of the same faith, we do fun stuff every month, good bonding time, always have good food,**

7. If no to #2 Why you are not involved with TLC



8. If no to #2 What would or could be done to make you want to be part of the TLC group? **More information, better advertisement of when meetings are, text messages of meetings, more kids that I know going, make it more public, start sooner than eight grade, have a pre-teen group,**

9. Additional thought or ideas for the direction of youth within our congregation? **Leaders do a good job, have more youth interaction, when inviting youth explain all that the youth group does, we should have a lock in,**