Attracting Youth Back to the United Methodist Church

“Have Mercy”
Consuelo Baker Brad Craft Rudy Deveaux Victoria Gunther Todd Mixon Diane Trayham Carolyn Upshur

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Introduction: Why Youth Ministry

They are just a bunch of kids, why are they so important?

Why should we dedicate so much time and energy to these students when there are so many searching adults out there who certainly aren’t getting any younger?

These folks are so young there will be plenty of time to reach them later in life.

First and foremost, God has commanded us to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Mat 28:19).” Our Father does not make a distinction based on age, sex, race, etc.; he commands us to go and make disciples of all nations, of all people.

God also teaches us that young people are valuable ministers when sharing his word and love in this world. Timothy was a young man, a protégé of the apostle Paul, and was given the responsibility of ministering to and providing leadership for the church in Ephesus. This is no small responsibility. Timothy’s promise for the ministry was recognized early and thus Paul took him under his wing and mentored him. Timothy had to overcome the timidity and fear of youth, but Paul encouraged him to embrace the authority given him. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul says “let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” Timothy is commissioned to set an example for the people of the church in Ephesus. What are we learning by the example of the youth in our church?

As John Richard Wimber, musician and founder of Vineyard Christian Fellowship, once said, “Some call them Generation X. Others call them baby busters. I call them our future (Manser, 2001).” The future of our denomination is in the hands of our youth. In 2004, 43% of all Methodist churches within the United States failed to obtain one new member (Green, 2006). Engaging youth in the life of the church is vital to ensuring the future of the church. They will be the leaders, ministers, and witnesses for generations to come.

Research has shown that God’s children are much more likely to be reached when they are young. According to George Barna, “most of the people who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so at a young age; the median age being 16. In total, six out of ten people say they made their decision to accept Christ before age 18. At the other end of the age spectrum, only 8% of those 50 years or older claim to have made a decision to embrace Christ as their savior after their 50th birthday” (www.barna.org). So, there is no time like the present… our churches are called to lead, nurture, and empower our young people today, not tomorrow.

As adults, we are called to be role models for our youth. Someone once said “every adult Christian generation owes its young people a divine demonstration of the reality of what it believes” (Manser, 2001). We are called to model what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ so that our children and youth will learn from our example. A faithful mentor in a young person’s life can have more influence than any textbook.
According to the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, “the purpose of the Division of Ministries With Young People (and by extension, the Youth Ministry of our local churches) is to empower young people as world-changing disciples of Jesus Christ, to nurture faith development, and to equip young leaders by 1) developing youth/young adult spiritual leaders of local congregations to transform lives by making disciples of Jesus Christ; 2) challenging The United Methodist Church to embrace, confirm, and celebrate God’s call on the lives of young people; 3) cultivating and nurturing life-giving ministries where influence and worth are not limited by age or experience…” There is a lot of information in that statement.

- Young people can change the world. Jesus Christ works through the lives of his disciples here on earth regardless of age.
- The church is to nurture its youth in their faith development and on their spiritual walk.
- The church is to equip its young leaders so they may be successful in their areas of ministry.
- We are to acknowledge and celebrate God’s call in the lives of young people. God has a special calling for young people? Absolutely! God calls all of his people.

It is of vital importance that today’s church take seriously its responsibility in ministering to its youth and in reaching out to the unchurched youth of its community.

**Vision /Mission**

The first consideration in developing a successful Youth Ministry is to understand clearly the vision and mission of the ministry.

A key distinction between maintaining a youth group and building a dynamic youth 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” (Boshers, 1997). Vision is where you are ultimately going.

The vision of the ministry area is not just one person’s idea of where this ministry is going. Vision starts with God. Youth ministers and the leadership team should spend time with God, discerning His will for the ministry, and communicating and confirming that vision with each other. And this vision must be shared with youth in a way that is exciting, something they really want to embrace, support, and promote. Defining and communicating the vision may not be an easy task, but it is vital to the effectiveness of the youth ministry of the church.

While the vision of the ministry says *where* we are going, the mission of the ministry says *how* we’re going to get there. Without a mission, the vision could just become a lofty goal. “A mission statement provides a set of general ministry objectives and communicates the
philosophical value of the vision” (Boshers, 1997). It provides a framework for achieving the goal.

Here are some helpful guidelines when developing a mission statement (Boshers, 1997):

1. Mission statements should be philosophical, not how-to guides.
2. Mission answers the “what” questions – “What are the targets?” and “What are we trying to do?”
3. Mission is clear and targeted.
4. Mission isn’t about motivations; it’s about focus.

Having a clear and concise mission allows the ministry area to focus on those activities that are truly accomplishing the goals it has set and to steer clear of those activities and efforts that stray from the mission. For each activity, leaders can ask, “How is this accomplishing the mission for our youth ministry?” The mission statement is what we are all about. Every activity, program, and event revolves around accomplishing this mission.

**Youth Groups vs. Youth Ministry**

A dynamic change that is currently happening in youth ministry is the realization that there is a difference between maintaining a youth group and building a youth ministry. A good analogy is: would you rather be a babysitter or lead a group of inspired, devoted followers of Christ? Too often we set limitations on our young people because we judge them incapable of impacting God’s world. We fail to give our youth the freedom to dream big dreams and to allow God to work through them no matter where it may lead. Youth leaders must teach those in their care that they are called to this ministry not simply to attend, but to become active participants.

Bo Boshers (1997) of Willow Creek Community Church describes it like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintaining a Youth Group</th>
<th>Building a Youth Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity-driven</td>
<td>Purpose-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear vision</td>
<td>Clear vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward focus/content</td>
<td>Outward focus/compassion for the lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal growth</td>
<td>Consistent growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs and games</td>
<td>Worship and prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep the traditions</td>
<td>Ask “Why” and “Is it working?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy in the world</td>
<td>Focused on kingdom work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose-driven… clear vision… compassion for the lost… Sounds like God’s vision for the church in general. Youth ministry has no less importance in God’s vision for impacting the world than any other ministry.
Billy Graham once said, “Young people will respond if the challenge is tough enough and hard enough. Youth wants a master and a controller. Young people were built for God, and without God as the center of their lives they become frustrated and confused, desperately grasping for and searching for security” (Manser, 2001). Our youth are crying out for answers and direction to cope with life’s many challenges. God is ready to give them a purpose and meaning for their lives. By developing a youth ministry that looks to God for guidance, our youth will learn that there is an answer to the questions they have been asking. Never forget that if we don’t show them that God is the answer to these questions, they will begin to look elsewhere in the world for answers.

Young people today are on a different plane than the adult leaders in the church. Their tastes, styles, music, etc. are much different from those of their parents. However, a common misconception is that youth will only respond when given a worship service that is “contemporary” in style. Barna noted that the millions of your unchurched have no understanding of or interest in a church, even if it is “contemporary” in style. “Millions of young adults are more interested in truth, authenticity, experiences, relationships, and spirituality than they are in laws, traditions, events, disciplines, institutions, and religion (www.barna.org).” The key point is that more important than style, today’s youth are looking for Truth. Present the true word of the Lord to today’s youth and they will respond.

**Important Characteristics of Youth Leaders**

Albert Schweitzer: “One… thing stirs me when I look back at my youthful days, the fact that so many people gave me something or were something to me without knowing it” (Manser, 2001).

As with any other area of the Church, to have an effective ministry, you must have effective leaders. Youth ministry is no different. But what makes effective youth leaders?

Youth leaders must be open-minded, creative, and willing to help youth discover what God is calling them to be and do. Today’s youth are not the same as the youth of the previous generation. What worked wonderfully yesterday may not reach today’s youth. Today’s youth is diverse, and the youth in the communities surrounding our churches may come from a wide range of cultures. Youth leaders must be able to develop activities and programs that are engaging to many different cultures.

Also the method of educating our youth has changed. Our past generation was happy being passive observers, as modeled by the popularity of television as a teaching or informational tool. The new generation of youth prefers the interactivity of computer games and the Internet; they want to be involved. Youth leaders must be comfortable with the youth taking active roles, and they must be able to encourage and equip the youth to do so.

In a recent interview with eight young people, peer leadership was identified as a vital point of connecting with young people who are seeking a comfortable place in a church family. Leaders need not, and indeed should not, be solely adults. Identifying and developing leadership skills
among the youth in your ministry will add unimaginable depth and bonding within the group itself.

Gene Roehlkepartain, a senior advisor for the nonprofit Search Institute, points out that whether the leaders of youth programs are adult leaders or leaders of the same age, the qualifications are the same. The leader’s life should be positive. The Christian leader should be certain of his own relationship to Christ and be happy in it. Roehlkepartain advises: Take people with a passion for youth, and add to that passion, character and to that character, skills.

And above all, the leader’s life should be without question. Every leader of youth needs to be reminded, “Don’t look now, but you’re being followed.”

**Challenges of Developing and Retaining Youth Pastors**

Recognizing the characteristics of an effective youth leader is only the first challenge for the church. Recruitment, development, and retention of youth pastors are ongoing problems not only for Methodism, but across denominations. A recent check of the job openings posted with the UMC North Georgia Conference showed 10 openings for youth pastors—and that only reflects openings posted on the Conference website.

As demand for youth ministers has increased, churches have often found themselves in competition with each other for the services of skilled youth pastors. Job-hopping has become all too commonplace. It is not uncommon for youth pastors to remain at a same church for less than a year. As they gain experience and competition for their services increases, they often go seeking greener pastures and other opportunities.

The problem of retention is not new. Churches have been struggling with this for years. However, one cause may be the poor hiring practices of the church itself.

In a recent interview with a person seeking a youth pastor position, the candidate related a time during seminary when he was having a conversation with an upper-level North Georgia Conference pastor specifically about his calling to youth ministry and was asked, “Why, at your age, would you want to work with youth? That’s only an entry level position.” The position of youth pastor is often looked at as a “stepping stone” for newly ordained clergy. Young recent graduates from seminary are recruited to be youth pastors. Often the youth pastor position is filled with part-time student pastors who haven’t even finished seminary yet. These new clergy are often more similar in age to the youth they lead, and it is assumed that they can “relate to” and “connect with” them. Unfortunately, new clergy are often unprepared to meet the spiritual needs of today’s youth. The challenges of today’s teenagers are complex: drugs, school, peer pressure, sex, and other societal influences. To completely address the issues and concerns of today’s youth, one must be capable of meeting their spiritual and emotional needs.

Perhaps the solution to the challenges of recruiting, developing, and retaining youth pastors cannot be found in just filling all the open positions in our churches with warm bodies. Perhaps the solution is one of “calling.” The church should look past the traditional stereotype of young,
newly ordained clergy and begin to seek youth leaders who are truly called by God to work with youth and pastor to their needs.

The church that realizes that the needs of today’s youth require more than a part-time student pastor who is in his or her learning stages will be the church that has a thriving youth ministry and a pool of youthful leadership to build upon. Effective youth ministry requires planning of programs and events, counseling, and other disciplines that meet the needs of the youth and their families. It takes committed individuals who are passionate about young people and are willing to commit to the task God has called them to.

**Getting Youth to Attend—Reaching Them Where They Are**

So now you have a vision and mission for your youth ministry and you have effective leaders in place. How do you draw youth to your ministry?

Today’s unchurched youth have several characteristics: (1) they each lack hope; (2) they think in terms of hurts and needs; (3) sin is not an issue; (4) guilt no longer motivates them; (5) they aren’t familiar with or don’t understand religious language; and (6) they are on a spiritual quest (Wright 1994). We must meet them on their own turf and reach out to them. We must offer what they’re looking for.

To know the youth in your community, you must first spend time asking God for strength and guidance. You might have to research the local area to find out where youth congregate. Hang around the places where youth congregate in order to understand all we can about them. We need to follow Christ’s commission—to go into the world. We need to provide activities/events that take place where they congregate (Monnik, 2006).

We also need to offer activities and programs that are appealing and relevant. Some churches have tried engaging youth by incorporating popular music styles. Contemporary Christian music is exploding, and the creative “get involved generation” has validated the importance of music in their relationship with God and the Church. D.J. Born Again, whose real name is Ramon Jackson states, “Youngsters have to have something done in a way they can understand… I deliver the message, but I keep it raw. During a Friday night service at Changed Life church there were 40 youth participating in the holy hip-hop message.” The publisher of U-Zone, Curtis Germany states, “Gospel hip-hop has been around as long as regular hip-hop—it just didn’t get much acceptance or attention.” Christianity instead of profanity is featured in the gospel rap movement (Johnson, 2006).

**Challenges to Getting Youth to Church**

Over the past 20 years, family life has changed. An increasing number of youth’s households consist of a single parent, often as a result of divorce. And in many homes with two parents, both parents work outside the home. When both parents work, Sunday is often the only day when the family can be together. One strategy is to have youth outreach ministry on any day but Sunday. Another strategy is to start a Kid's Club with activities, Bible study, music, and snacks to
provide Christian education to the unchurched youth in a fun environment. (Olson-Bunnell, 2002).

The challenges for some may be as simple as transportation. While recently talking with some youth about why they don’t attend church, they indicated that their parents can’t or don’t want to bring them. A few had parents who are deceased, and they have no one to encourage them about having a relationship with God or about continuing their spiritual growth. Part of the reason some don’t attend more is that their parents are uncooperative where church attendance is concerned, and the youth have no way to get to there. (Smith and Denton, 2005).

So how do churches address these issues? One solution may be to offer busing programs, encourage carpool, or have other youth friends and parents “adopt” a youth in need and provide transportation when necessary. Churches beginning youth programs or with little resources should remember that they are not alone in working for God’s kingdom. Churches should encourage cooperative ministry with other local churches. By sharing the ministry with other churches, busing kids from one church to another location and vice-versa, both groups of youth will benefit from each other and both youth programs will continue to grow until each is self-sustaining.

**A Real-Life Example**

I’m presently a member of Cliftondale United Methodist Church. The congregation is small, (approx. 50 in attendance and 30 homebound). The largest age group is between 60 and 85. We currently have eight children of which six are youth. They have formed a choir and sing once a month. Our musician, who will be graduating from college in May 2006, has started a youth ministry. They meet at the church or at a member’s house for choir practice and Sunday school. I have been eagerly pursuing youth for the church. However, one the problems we are having is providing transportation for the children, whose parents do not attend church, nor have a desire to bring them to church. Before we can mentor them…we just have to get them through the church doors.

—LUMC attendee

**Youth Discipleship**

One report about youth ministry noted that the average church was only in contact with the typical youth member 72 hours a year (Scott, 1989). The church must make the most of that time. It is not enough just to get youth back to the church with large events that encourage fun and festivities. While this approach can help draw a crowd, it does little to help fulfill the great commission in Mathew 28:18-20. Jesus himself commands us to make disciples, teaching them to obey all the commands he has given us. The best part is in Matthew 20 where he reminds us that He is with us always. The task is big, but Jesus is on our side. The church has the power through Jesus Christ to not only attract youth back to the church, but also make them deeply committed followers of Jesus Christ. Here are a few ideas from some of today’s successful youth ministries.
Small Groups or Cell Groups
This is the way most churches today approach youth discipleship. If the groups are constructed correctly, the results are tremendous. On the other hand, if the groups have no structure or spiritual leadership, then we are simply providing an outlet for the youth to party. How do we measure our performance in this area? Again, we should turn to scripture. The scriptures are clear on spiritual fruit; if the groups do not reflect some type of spiritual fruit, then something needs to change. Things that we might look at changing would be leadership, size, length, or makeup.

Leadership
Leadership is one of the key components of successfully discipling today’s youth. Leadership is not just a Youth Pastor. Most churches do not have the means to pay a full-time person for this role; however, this should never be a reason to give up. Someone in your congregation is feeling the call to step up in this area. Remember God always equips the called, He never calls the equipped. We find story after story in the scriptures that confirm this. Leadership is not just one person, but other key leaders to help in the discipleship process. These leaders can be older youth helping younger youth or parents interested in helping youth reach their fullest potential. One word of caution about parents, not all parents are gifted as youth leaders. The one thing you are looking for here is spiritual maturity, someone who can see beyond the here and now. In their book The D Factor, Liz West & Paul Hopkins state that “carrying a sense of responsibility for the emerging generation of youth people is a high calling. It is very near to God’s heart.”

Size
If the shoe fits wear it. If it doesn’t, try another shoe. The same should be said about our discipleship groups—if they don’t fit together then find the right fit. The main idea of these groups is to develop disciples of Jesus Christ through accountability and relationship. The best chance for this to happen is to keep the groups small and have a leader that facilitates the right environment.

Length
Time is critical and we must know the warning signs of a group that has been together too long. If a group has been together for over a year, that in itself might be a good sign that change is needed. On the other hand, we should make sure to give growth a chance. A group that has only met for a month might just need more time to develop. It is important to realize that each group will grow at a different pace. There is not a set time that works for every group. Again we are looking for spiritual fruit; evaluate what these groups are producing. Meet with your leaders on a regular basis to get feed back.

Makeup
Who will makeup the groups? This can become a challenge if there are more guys than girls or if there are huge age differences. Meet with your leaders first, start to pray about what each group might look like. Think about the needs at hand. Maybe your community is struggling with a highly publicized problem that can serve as a spring board to launching these groups. Maybe survey the group and find out what their needs are, making note of recurring themes. Creating an environment for change should be our ultimate goal in the makeup of these groups.
The Challenge
The challenge before us is to change the hearts & minds of the youth today to be deeply committed followers of Jesus Christ. This process takes time—don’t be afraid to try something new. At the same time, if something is not working, do not be afraid to say it did not work. We all learn in life from failure. The school of hard knocks can be painful, but produces great leadership if we learn from our mistakes. Remember, God is on our side in this task and He promises to never leave or forsake us.

Authentic Worship Experiences

Worship is universal. We all have a God-given desire to worship; that is what he created us for. The question is what are we worshipping and why? Romans 12:1-2 urges us in view of God’s mercy to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. We are no longer to cling to the things of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Today’s youth seek to fill that spiritual void in their life, and most of the time it is played out in ways that are not part of that God-given desire. It is our job as the church to offer worship experiences that will allow for the renewing of the mind that causes transformation in today’s youth.

Authentic means to be what we were intended to be, not something we are not. If we seek to create an authentic worship experience for youth, we must recognize that it will not look like a traditional church service. Everything from the worship space to the worship music should seek to appeal to youth. I believe another big key is youth leadership; of course there needs to some adult guidance. There is a fine balance between the adult guidance and the youth leader. The two must learn first of all to pray together, plan together, and in the end respect each others’ differences. This is not an area where the church needs to give up the battle. Our youth are the church of tomorrow.

Ultimately we are looking for a changed life. Transformation by the renewing of our minds is what God is after. If we are truly transformed during worship, it changes the way we live our life. If these worship experience simply entertain or allow our youth to have fun, then we have missed the reason altogether. Youth today are faced with real issues that negatively affect their lives everyday. They need to know the power of worshipping the one true living God. It will only happen through an authentic worship encounter with God Himself. The task is not an easy one. We as the church must be committed to the task; we must put aside our difference about what we think and look to God for what He wants.

Bob Rognlien, in his book Experiential Worship, says a true encounter with God is with the heart, soul, mind, and strength. We as the church need to help our youth, the next generation church, encounter God with their heart, soul, mind, and strength. This was what Jesus commanded of us in the great commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. It’s so important that we win this battle for our youth, let them learn to love God in their own God-given design.
The Role of Parents and the Church Family in Youth Ministry

It is not enough for parents to simply drop their youth off at activities. They must be active participants in the youth program, beyond helping to run fundraisers and serving as retreat chaperones. Likewise, in the church, it not solely the youth leaders and parents who should play a role in mentoring and encouraging youth. All adults have a responsibility to help youth grow into disciples who can impact the world for Christ. In the Methodist church, all adults pledge to do just that when children are baptized and confirmed.

But increasing parental involvement may bring some challenges. In his book *Family-based Youth Ministry*, Mark Devries (2004) cites nine cultural shifts that have taken place during the past generation which have increasingly separated children and youth from the world of adults, especially the adults in their own families. These include parents’ occupational choices, which often remove them from the home for lengthy periods of time; the rapid increase in single-parent families; the evolution of separate physical environments within the home to include playrooms and master bedrooms; the isolation of children from the adult work world; and the insulation of schools from the rest of society. One might also add to this list the invasion of technological devices, including cell phones, I-pods, and game systems. According to Harvard Armond Nicholi, American parents spend less time with their children than parents in any other country in the world. Even when most families worship together, children are shuffled out to children’s church, and in some churches, teens frequently sit with friends instead of with their parents.

Devries insists that the most important change within our church should be the inclusion of programming for parents of children and teenagers. Intentional family-based programming should not replace youth programming, but the emphasis should be the same. In a USA Weekend survey of 250,000 teenagers, 70% identified their parents as the most important influence in their lives. “Because of the extensive exposure parents have to their own children they leave an indelible impression that radically affects how receptive their children will be to the gospel.

There is overwhelming evidence that parents are, almost always, the single most significant determining factor in the development of their children. Research has repeatedly shown the strong correlation between healthy family ties and positive social behaviors in teenagers.”

Unfortunately, not all parents are equipped and prepared to lead their children toward Christian maturity. Devries advocates a greater emphasis on incorporating bible studies and seminars on important family issues like recovering from divorce, preparing for parenting an adolescent, enriching your marriage, teaching your children Christian values, and understanding your teenager—all which would serve as windows to building faith maturity in the parents of teenagers. The first priority must be to empower the parents.

In addition to empowering parents and providing opportunities for them to interact in church programs with their youth, other adults in the church must be encouraged and trained to play a role in the youth ministry. Devries suggests adding to the traditional youth leadership roles by creating co-leadership roles with Christian adults within the church doing something that benefits someone other than the youth group. For instance, the mission committee co-chair should be an
appointed youth. Other suggestions include requiring the youth to visit different adult Sunday school classes for one month (to encourage and enhance communication with adults), developing Big Brother programs, adopting foster grandparents, inviting senior members to talk with youth about their experiences in the war or give their testimonies, and creating opportunities for the church to be together overnight or longer (e.g., family retreats, joint baseball games, seminars, and vacations taken as a church). Out of 19 suggested revised youth programs, Devries’ number-one choice was a youth ministry with parents and the extended church family involved in missions.

Dan Scott, in an article entitled Approaches to Youth Ministry (1989), had a similar view—that youth ministry must involve a team approach as opposed to the single youth leader. It must focus on the importance of a community of support and care. He proposed that a successful youth ministry should include traditional (i.e., Sunday school, acolytes, choir, and youth night) and non-traditional activities (i.e., guidance, counseling, and support groups), along with strong family/parent programs (family retreats, joint bible lessons and events in addition to the teen only plans).

Devries concluded, “the most important priority a church can have in its work with teenagers is providing them with opportunities for significant dialogue and relationships with mature Christian adults.” These adults must be not only parents, but adults throughout the congregation.

So, God has set us a command and a challenge. He has given His Church the responsibility of sharing His love and testimony in a world of darkness. A world in which our youth, our children, are living and growing up. This world, society, is doing everything possible to make our youth comfortable with and succumb to the evils and temptations it offers.

How is God’s Church going to respond to His command? One vital step that is within our power is to acknowledge the importance that Youth play in His plan for the Church. We must take seriously our responsibility to nurture and encourage the spiritual growth of the youth entrusted to our care.
References


Appendix A: Survey Results

As part of the research into Youth Ministry, a survey was conducted. A total of 36 surveys were completed and returned by youth. The results of the surveys are summarized below. The actual survey questions are highlighted in bold text.

Current participation

The respondents were asked to acknowledge whether they currently attend church.

**Question 1: Do you attend church regularly?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections, labeled “Non-participation”, are questions asked of respondents who indicated they did not attend church on a regular basis.

Non-participation

The respondents were asked why they do not attend church on a regular basis. The responses for this question were coded and group by theme. The following table reflects these themes and the number of responses where the theme was expressed.

**Question 2: Why are you not attending church on a regular basis?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Responses Where Theme Expressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All about money</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose not to attend</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family don’t, so I don’t</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a Christian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More like a cult</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The respondents who were involved in church activities were asked if they had attended bible study or youth ministry.

**Question 3: Have you attended bible study/youth ministry in the past?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Responses Where Theme Expressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Ministry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-participation – Help

The respondents who were not involved in church activities were asked what activities like to see offered. The responses for this question were coded and group by theme. The following table reflects these themes and the number of responses where the theme was expressed.

**Question 4: What activities do you want offered?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Responses Where Theme Expressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exciting Sermons</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Trips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections, labeled “Participation”, are questions asked of respondents who indicated they were currently participating in church activities.

**Participation - Areas of Involvement**

The respondents who indicated that they were currently involved in church activities were asked in what ways they were involved. The responses for this were coded and grouped by theme. The following table reflects these themes and the number of responses where the theme was expressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Responses Where Theme Expressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Ministry</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participation – Reasons for Involvement

The respondents who indicated that they were currently involved in church activities were asked in what ways they were involved. The responses for this were coded and grouped by theme. The following table reflects these themes and the number of responses where the theme was expressed.

**Question 6: What are your reasons for involved?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Responses Where Theme Expressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual growth</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To encourage others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be with others my age</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To share my faith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise and Worship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy music</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Useful Links

www.ileadyouth.com
This website has a load of great info. Look under the articles tab and you can get info on just about any topic you can think of, from increasing attendance to fundraising.

www.youthspecialties.com

www.youthministrytools.com
This is a place to link to lots of other web-sites that offer youth ministry stuff.

www.pastor2youth.com

www.thesource4ym.com
This is a rich site also. Lots of info.

www.youthministry.com

www.simplyyouthministry.com

www.studentlifebiblestudy.com

www.youthpastor.com

www.gbod.org/youngpeople/
This is the website for the General Board of Discipleship – the main UMC website.

www.umcyouth.org
The website for the North Georgia Conference Youth Ministries.

www.higherpraise.com

www.egadideas.com

www.theooze.com