

VISION PATH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Concerns and Input of High School Students:

In response to the identified second highest ranked vision path of “an expansion of our youth development programs”, three advanced grade level Lemon Bay High School students were interviewed in order to ascertain their specific church-related priorities and/or needs. All three students were church goers with one being a LCMS Lutheran, one an Episcopalian, and one a non-denominational Protestant. All three youngsters were well-grounded in church doctrine and worship protocol. The students were very articulate and expressed themselves quite freely and/or frankly.

On the topic of church likes/dislikes they very much liked the idea of feeling good and “free” as a result of participating in the worship service and engaging in teen church-sponsored social activities. They also noted that most of the time not fully understanding the sermon, and that sermons might relate more to their needs and use some teen examples.

The discussion then moved in the direction of the need for spiritual help and guidance during certain social decision making events with respect to their daily lives. All three noted that on occasions they sought guidance from their respective pastors. They were also quite revealing about decision making instances where on-site and “at the moment” they prayed for help from God.

A bulk of the discussion then focused on how to get their unchurched friends to tryout church. A very surprising response was that most of the students at the high school have a church affiliation. Also, it was noted that there was little or no anti-church peer pressure or bullying of active church members. All three students indicated that it would not be difficult to attract their few unchurched friends to church-sponsored teen related local activities.



And finally, the commentary zeroed in on “what new things need to happen” to attract more high school aged youth to church. This was the cue to get the conversation focusing on what we (Redeemer) need to do in order to address the vision path of “an expansion of our youth development programs”. The discussion then totally focused on the creation of church-sponsored social teen events such as dances, TV shows simulations (“Dancing with the Stars”, Dating Game”, etc.), beach parties, pool gatherings, bonfires, Stonecrab baseball games, and night time teen events held in our church parking lot. A special emphasis was placed on implementing these events during the summer months when school is not in session, and there is little to do in Englewood during this time period. Somewhat surprising, even though several prompts were tossed out, there was no mention of “peppier” or contemporary worship services.

Now, we know or have some idea of what needs to be done in order to move forward with regard to the vision path of “an expansion of our youth development programs”. The problem now is the “who” and “how” will this vision path be realized. A strategic plan would greatly facilitate its manifestation. Will it be volunteers from the congregation “stepping up” to design, develop and implement a “beefed-up” youth program, or will it be necessary to hire a Director of Christian Education (DCE)? What do you think? Let us hear from you!!