

Good Morning Trinity,

I want to take this opportunity to tell you all about our Youth Group that you have all been supporting. Not only is youth group a great place for our youth to come and be part of the church with fun activities and learn about God. It is also a place for them to experience emotional support. I honestly believe that without youth group, some of our current youth would not be attending the church anymore. Before youth group there was not much for our youth who had been confirmed to do. Yes they now are a voting member of the church and are considered an adult in the eyes of the church but there was nothing just for them. I have a few youth in particular that I want to tell you about but first let me give you a brief history of how this start.

After Sunday school one day, one of the youth in the church came up and asked me if it was possible to have a youth group because they felt that there was nothing for them and they had no reason for really being at church. I told them that it would be possible for sure and we decided together to start up with our first event of a board game night. A few youth showed up, I believe there were only 3, however that number has continued to grow. After talking with the Methodist church in town about youth group they also wanted their youth to be a part of it but felt that they did not have enough. So from there we combined with them to help both of our youth groups grow. We have now started this to combine with the Baptist church as well. All these churches came together to show the youth and others that our churches are united. I am excited to see where this will lead us in the future as we further grow our relationships with these churches and our youth.

Now I would like to tell how youth group has impacted some of our youth. To start with, one of our youth has had a rough up bring with abuse and neglect. This youth did not feel as if they could talk to anyone about it. Yes the abusers is in jail, but the youth themselves felt as if that abusers is still out to get them and everything that happened to them was their fault. This youth was brought to youth group by a friend. When the youth first arrived they were not too sure of what to do and kind of stood there in the back watching. However as the year went on the youth came out of their shell and determined that this place that we call youth group is a safe places to express their feelings and concerns. At a lock-in this youth share with me their past and the things that still haunt them. After talking for more than an hour the youth felt like someone finally listened and finally understood what they were going through. This youth is now taking steps in the right direction to overcome their fears. I do not believe this would have happened if they were not brought to youth group because this youth had no interested in talking about their past. This youth also comes to church when they can because their family does not go to church. They have decided that Trinity is a good and safe place for them.

Another youth I want to tell you about was heading down the wrong path fast. They were going to church and enjoyed it, however when they went to school they did not want to admit that they went to church and enjoyed it. They were failing classes and starting to hang out with the wrong friends. They were experiencing a home life that they struggled to find peace in. Part of that was from them being a teenager and the other part was from lack of communication on both parts. They started to come to youth group and not much had changed. They were acting much like many of use and wearing a mask. The mask was that my life is great, and I am super close to God and all my friends know it. This youth was trying to be something they were not. I started to interact with this youth more and more as much as I could. I had them go to Sunday school to help me teach. I had taken them to lunch a few times. I started to encourage them to explore their faith in a safe environment. Now this Youth is doing well in

school, making good friends, and home is becoming a more enjoyable place. This youth also went to Leadership Lab and found so much joy and safety there. Even though Lab was in July they still talk about it and cannot wait to go back. When I leave this June they want to make sure that youth group stays strong and that Sunday school is well taken care of. Without youth group, I believe we would have lost this youth from the church and life for them would be a never ending uphill battle that they kept losing.

Finally I want to tell you about another youth. Their family had just moved to Laramie. When you are entering a new school and a high school on top of that it can be hard to make friends. When you grow up with a church life that hasn't been your favorite it is hard to want to come to a new church and be part of something that you have known to be boring. Thanks to the youth in youth group when this person came to Laramie they welcomed them with open arms. Asked them to join us on Sunday evenings and made sure that this youth had someone to sit by. This youth has also started to help with Sunday school. Youth group helped them integrate into this town smoothly. This was all thanks to youth group not from me but from the youth that make up our group. They did not have to be so welcoming, but they were because each and every one of them knows what is like to try something new and they know youth group is a safe place to try it.

The stories that I have shared above are only a few stories of what youth group has done, not only on a church level but an emotional one as well. If I were to tell you all of the stories you would be here all day. Do know that youth group is and will continue to be a safe place not only for the youth to learn more about God but a place where the youth feel as if they are being support both in faith and emotionally. I am deeply honored to have gotten the chance to be a part of this wonderful opportunities that we provide for our youth. Our youth are the **here and the now** and it does not do us any good to only support them in faith, we have to support them emotionally as well. So thank you all for allowing this ministry to unfold.

Becky