



For the Record

Does Your Youth Group Have a History?

As an official organization of your church, you need to be included in the congregation's records and archives. But while your youth group may be a recognized organization, it may not have a formal structure. Nevertheless, your presence in the life of the congregation is important and needs to be remembered and archived.

Archives

- identify your unique group,
- record its decisions, and
- leave a visible trail of activities.



Getting Started

- Keep a log of your group's activities. Keep it simple.
- Once in awhile, record in more detail a discussion or issue important to your group. This will help you—and future generations of youth groups—to get a clearer picture of your world and your faith.
- If your youth group isn't included in your church's annual reports, be proactive, and write a report anyway. Ask for it to be included in your congregation's annual meeting. Give copies to the moderator, Christian Education chair and pastor.
- Select someone in your group to keep a scrapbook for the year.



Include formal and fun stuff. Identify people in pictures. Every few years, ask the church clerk or historian to put your old scrapbooks with the church's archives.

What to Look For

- **Official Organizational Records.** Minutes, newsletters, membership lists
- **Published Materials.** Youth Sunday bulletins, special events, and related items, web pages (printed out).
- **Ephemera/Memorabilia.** Scrapbooks, photo albums (with pictures identified), songbooks, tangible objects (youth group mission trip T-shirt)

Youth Group Program Ideas

Scripture

“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other ...I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come.”

Isaiah 46:9-10

Purpose

To learn about the history of your church and its importance in the life of church members and the community.

To create a way for your youth group memories to be included in your congregation's archives.

Bible Study

Find examples of God, the prophets, or the apostles telling the people to remember. What kinds of things are they to remember? How will remembering help them in the future? What lessons can we learn from the past? What favorite Bible story do you remember when you need to be encouraged?

Invite Guests

Invite church members of various ages to come to your youth group for a panel or small group discussion. Let them know ahead of time that you'll be asking them about their experiences and memories of their church youth group. Here are some sample questions:

- What do you remember about your youth group?
- What kind of things did you do? What issues were important to you?
- Did your involvement in your youth group make a difference in your faith? How?

Archives Scavenger Hunt

First, find out if your congregation has a person designated as a church historian, church clerk or administrative board secretary, responsible for the archives of your church. Ask them to come to a meeting to discuss the history of your congregation.

With the guidance of your church historian/clerk/secretary, survey the building. Look into files, storerooms, cupboards, attics and basements, even the furnace room. Clearly mark any historical items found to be saved.

Put a notice in bulletins and newsletters, write former clergy or officers, asking them to remember and let the historian know where they have seen things stored.

History Mystery Hunt

First, look for signs of history. Are there church windows dedicated to someone's memory? A church cornerstone? How about a Sunday School class that's named after a person? Are there Christian symbols around the sanctuary? Was the education wing built at the same time as the sanctuary? Why or why not?

Next, find out what you can about that person or thing. Is there anyone in your congregation who knew the persons named on the window? What was your community like when the cornerstone was laid? Why did the Sunday School class want to honor the person they're named for? What do those Christian symbols mean, and how long have they been in use? Do the Trustees have the blueprints to the building? You may want to take a field trip to the public library to find out more about symbols or the history of your community. The reference librarians will be impressed!

Write up your findings and share them with your congregation in church bulletins, newsletter articles, or in your own church history journal. Your congregation will love it!