



## **IDW Mission Grant Evaluation Report Form**

Grant recipients are to complete and submit the report form within one month of the completion of the effort. If this is a continuing ministry, please submit a report by January 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year, in which the grant is received. Include pictures/videos that help share the story with other congregations to encourage them in their own ministry. Final grant funds will be sent upon receipt of this evaluation.

### **Contact Person, Congregation, and email address:**

Jessica Tibben, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Denison, IA,  
osljess@oursaviordenison.com

#### 1. Please provide a brief overview of the effort:

Connect Youth Bible Study started two years ago with a group of ladies that wanted to bring connection with our JR High (7th & 8th) and SR High (9th-12th) youth to God, caring adults, and community. They saw the need in the community for something bigger and wanted to help what was currently in place grow. We developed Connect - Connecting to Christ and Others with the idea that we could grow the youth in our community through Bible study, fellowship, and food. We opened up the ages of the current youth group model to include the 7th - 8th grade students and getting them connected before those critical after-confirmation years. This Connect Youth Bible Study meets on Wednesday Nights from 7:30pm - 9:00pm. The youth are split up into 4 groups for the Bible Study time - HS Boys, MS Boys, MS Girls, and HS Girls. We join together for prayer and games at the end of each Connect time and for holiday parties/events/service projects.

#### 2. What goals were established for this effort and what did you hope to accomplish?

Our main goals for this were to get youth connected with God, one another, the community, and caring adults. We established this with connecting them with one another and the community by reaching out to all local area churches and extending an invitation to join/partner with us in this effort. We wanted this to be a place that reached out to more than just the youth at Our Savior but to the community. Providing a place where youth can grow in their faith and be connected. In establishing the most important mission of ours, which is to connect youth with Christ -- we made an intentional effort of having thought-provoking Bible Study time that makes up a big portion of our gathering time. We emphasize to youth that our main importance is not that they just know Jesus but that they KNOW Him. We are going over the series of Can I Ask That? and have went over the curriculum but added our own Student Can I Ask That questions to see how we can best connect God to them in their daily lives. Our third major goal

is acts of service to the church and the community. We want to encourage youth in service by providing service project opportunities and helping them to see the discipleship and outreach that comes from it.

3. Did you achieve your goals? If not, what do you think were some of the contributing factors?

I believe that we have achieved most of our goals and continue to work on better improving the areas that we haven't successfully achieved yet. I would say one goal that we found most difficult to achieve was getting other congregations to be connected in this effort. We continue to reach out and we have been blessed with one congregation that has joined up with us in this effort. We are hopeful that we can continue to connect with other congregations in the surrounding area to help lift up their youth program and show youth that we are not a divided force but a united front. We want to continue to improve on adding in more service opportunities for the youth and have made that our focus for the new year in how we can best serve our community -- we notice that it is something that the youth truly enjoy participating in and want to continue to encourage that with the connection of serving God while serving others.

4. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to undertake this effort again?

One beautiful thing that came from this effort was a bunch of enthusiasm to get it started and have it take off. If I was to start this effort over again, I would highly stress giving it more time to breathe and take form then just charging off to do it and picking up the pieces as they came. It had a great mission but there were kinks that we had to work out along the way with having it start up so quickly. Overall, it was a beautiful start and God worked through those kinks to make it what it is today.

5. What lessons were learned through this effort?

Community, Connection, and Growing in Christ are important things in the church today. I believe that the youth learned the lesson that the church cares about them and that there is more than just 1 or 2 staff members that do. I also believe that they are seeing the growth in unity together in Christ and growing in their faith through these great small group Bible studies. I believe our adult volunteers have learned the lessons of how God works through the mess and always provides. That He has been a guiding force in this ministry and by building a sense of community with the leaders as we continue to seek to grow these youth.

6. Will this outreach effort continue and be sustaining? Did a new outreach opportunity present itself?

Yes. The plan is to continue this in place for many years to come.

7. What suggestions would you give to a congregation considering a similar effort?

Seek God and others to help encourage and push you as you bring the Gospel to youth in your community.