52 YOUTH PROGRAMMES TO KEEP YOU GOING!

(2nd edition)

**Welcome to our second edition of ‘52 youth programmes to keep you going’.**

Our hope is that these programmes will assist you in your ministry to teenagers around the country! These programmes will not necessarily work for every youth group out there as each youth is unique – but feel free to give them a bash or adapt them to make them work.

And remember that programmes are just here to HELP in creating a place where real ministry can happen: creating a place to build relationships (in order to earn the right to speak into teens’ lives); to disarm teens through love and fun, breaking down barriers they may have put around their hearts; and to create a safe, fun environment that teens can bring their unsaved friends to.

**(1) BREAK-A-THON**

Collect broken appliances (kettles, computer screens, TV's, cellphones, etc), put an old carpet down in the hall, and have 2-3 hockey sticks available. Put everyone’s name in a hat, and when your name gets called, choose an item… and destroy it!

If you're looking for deep spiritual truths, use U2's "Walk On" song and chat about how we have to leave it all behind, all the material stuff - hence we need to ask, what is it that matters in life?

**(2) LOCK 'n LAN**

This is a typical 12hr lock-in, with the main attraction for the teens being that they’re able to LAN (i.e. connect +/-30 computers and play games for 12hrs). You need to ensure you have a 'hub' (basically a real fancy multiplug for computers). On the side you can cater for non-PC people with X-Box, Sports, Coffee, movies, etc.

**(3) WHEELCHAIR DERBY**

If you've got an uncarpeted floor in your church hall, source old tyres from a tyre fitting place (they're throwing them away anyway) and create an indoor go-cart track. Don't make the track complicated! Just a simple oval track works best. The difficult part is sourcing old wheelchairs, which will need some maintenance. An epic night - just not as fast as one might expect.

**(4) MAKE YOUR OWN VALENTINES/SPRING DINNER**

Have a cook off competition. Each group gets the same ingredients, two plate stove, utensils and décor to set a table. They would have to make a meal as well as set the table according to a theme. Do this either during valentines or spring. They would be judged by a chef or the manager of a restaurant on food, presentation and their table décor. You can also make the youth dress up either for Valentines or hippy style for spring.

**(5) MYTHBUSTERS:**

We've run this over a couple of weeks, and it can be so much fun if it’s done well! We linked it up to 'busting myths about the Bible' (eg. all good people go to heaven, etc.).

These are some of the myths we busted:

* Toast always lands butter side down - fling ten pieces of toast across the parking lot with a catty and 'document' how many land butter side down.
* You can't taste if your nose is blocked - put blindfolds and a peg on the nose, and feed the teens nasty mixtures, like peanut butter and garlic. See if they can tell you what it is.
* You can't make a parachute out of plastic bags - create a 'buster' doll, give groups plastic packets and string to make a parachute, and throw him off the church roof. See which parachute holds him in the air longest.
* You can't drink 2 litres of milk in one go - be prepared for some throwing up after this one.
* Toothpaste on bread makes you throw up - enough said.
* You can't drink a coke upside down.
* You can't down a Stoney in one go.

**(6) WATER WARS**

 The aim of the game is to wet the other team’s dustbin. The Dustbin (those big black bins work well) is wrapped in toilet paper so you can clearly see when it gets wet.

* Set up a course much like dodge ball ie. a center line making a field with two halves.
* Give each side a dustbin covered in toilet paper.
* We then set up tires as obstacles all over the place.
* Give each team 150+ Water balloons (you need a lot – they run out FAST) and 2 buckets full of water and sponges or foam offcuts.
* Allocate each team a side and let them go crazy until you blow the whistle and see whose team’s bin is the wettest. (And the loser.)

**(7) CLUEDO**

Set up a murder scene with various things that could be clues - old shoelaces, lipstick stains etc. that link up to one of the suspicious characters. You need either 7 or 10 characters, one of whom is the detective. The detective introduces the group to the murder scene, and explains how the game works (ie. that the group must question all the suspects as to where they were, what they were doing at the time of murder, who they think did it).

The other nine (or 6) characters you can design yourself - the weirder the better! The characters all have alibis as to where they were when the murder took place and they also each have someone they suspect. The characters work in triangles. ie. Character A suspects Character B, who suspects Character C, who suspects character A. The same pattern repeats with Characters D, E and F, and G, H and I. You could make the detective the murderer; you can make up a motive as to why he would kill the victim.

Alternatively, the 'winning group' could be the guys who present the best argument as to who they think did it (they come up with the most evidence, even if it’s far-fetched). A third alternative is that in some way the 'murder' could be a horrific accident and no-one is really guilty. The more 'red herrings' the better, and let the imaginations run wild, the youth are actually satisfied with a fairly cheesy explanation of how the murder took place.

**(8) 6-A-SIDE SOCCER TOURNAMENT**

Hire a soccer field with flood lights for the night. (You can open this up to the whole church, or to other youth groups.) Have teams enter into the competition, either in a social or competitive ‘league’. Have games being played throughout the evening – only 12min per game: 5 min each way with 2 min in between. The time would depend on how many teams and how much time you have. The winning teams would be decided by goals. You can work the tournament however you want, and have a prize giving, if you want, where you can hand out prizes for the top teams, the oldest player, the top goal scorer, the youngest player, the team with the most spirit, etc.

**(9) CAPTURE THE FLAG**

Split the youth into teams, and give each team all the things they need to make a flag and ammunition (flour, serviettes and string = flour bombs). They would go make their own fort with a prison area in some part of the church property (or you could use a field for this.) Once the allocated time is over, the teams attempt to capture each other’s flag. If a person is hit with a flour bomb they are held captive in the prison. If guarded they have to remain there, but can try to escape, not by force, but by being sneaky.

**(10) 12/24 HOUR BOILER ROOM**

Set out your church as a prayer boiler room: Washing of feet section; communion inside a tent or semi private area; a wall to paint or write or draw on; a table with candles on it – to be lit as people pray for God’s light to come into a situation, school, home, etc; a world map with countries highlighted and missionary stories given so youth could pray about them; red ribbon hanging from the ceiling representing cords of salvation that youth can put names of people that they desires to see saved onto. During the evening, have joint prayer times, worship, and also just let the teens move around as they wish.

**(11) COUCH RACES**

Teens get themselves into teams, take a 2seater coach and then race them round the neighborhood while completing a list of challenges, all the while carrying the couch. (Get your church members to donate old couches, or find some at the dump.) These challenges include doing things with the couch and photographing it for evidence. Eg. Sneak the couch into a yard and have a photo with the team all sitting on the couch or make the shape of a camel with the couch and your team. Another rule is that if a car comes everyone has to put the couch down and sit still till the car is gone. Then have rogue vehicles with water balloons who hit teams who are not sitting still.

**(12) CAMERAS, QUESTIONS AND GET IT**

Get groups into cars (driven by adults in your church) armed with ‘Cameras’, ‘Questions’ and ‘Get it’. For ‘Cameras’: Teams must take photos (e.g. a Fire truck, the team in the back of a police van.) For ‘Questions’, teams should find the answers to questions posed to them. (e.g. How much is the pink dress at Woolworths?, What color is the wall at 47 Parklane Rd?) For ‘Get it’, teams have to collect things. (e.g. a straw from McDonalds, a large fries recipe from KFC.) Allocate points to each task depending on distance and difficulty, so teams must choose which tasks they will do. First team to get to 50 points wins!

**(13) TRIBE EVENINGS**

This concept could facilitate more than one youth programme. The idea is to split the youth into tribes (permanently) – so they would belong to the red tribe, or the blue tribe (or you can use more original names). Every so often you allow the tribes to do different things for the evening to create a smaller, community feel. For example, the red tribe may go play tenpin bowling, while the blue tribe goes to someone’s house for a pool party; or the red tribe goes to the beach, while the blue tribe has a movie marathon at the church…

**(14) TRIBE WARS**

Then every so often, you can have tribe wars, where these same tribes battle against each other in some big event. This can either happen as a group, or individuals can represent their tribe.

For example: you could have each member tied to a bunjee chord (stretchy) and have to run up a hill (against the pull) and try get to the crate that had a fish on it, and put it in their mouth to win. Or use a jumping castle tower that they have to climb in order to pop a balloon with slimy stuff inside, which is hanging above it. Have each team try to pop the balloon at the same time, allowing them to push each other down the jumping castle (have mats around it, just in case). When the balloon pops, it will leak all the gooey stuff. You could call it the pimple popping event.

**(15) MEGA MCFLURRY**

Attempt to make the biggest Mcflurry! Then everyone gets stuck in and eats it.

**(16) INDOOR LUMO BEACH VOLLEYBALL PARTY**

(WARNING: Only try this if you are willing to do A LOT of work, if you have permission from your pastor, and if you don’t have carpets in your hall!!!)

Fill your hall up with beach sand, remove all the florescent lights and replaced them with black lights, and then paint everything in lumo paint. (Note: it will take hours of intense labor and possibly a 5 ton truck load of sand!!) Split the youth into team and have them register for the volleyball. (Do this the week before, and then have them come in matching outfits that will glow in the light.)

You can also do other events with the black lights, where everyone wears black, decorates themselves in white and plays different sport games.

**(17) JOUSTING**

Get two super market trolleys. Split groups into two teams. Each team must ‘kit’ their trolley out (decorate it). Then with someone in the trolley, armed with a stale French loaf, each team pushes their ‘knight and horse’ towards the opposing team (Like medieval jousting). The aim is to break your French loaf against the opposing ‘Knight’. Award points for area of impact and amount of roll landing in the opposing team’s trolley. Do this on a flat surface!

**(18) PRAISE PARTY**

This is simply an evening of praise and worship. Get a (or many) bands to play for the evening and allow the teens to worship God. You can vary this is lots of ways – allow dancing, rapping, testimonies, videos etc as different expressions of worship to God.

**(19) IN THE DARK**

Play old school kids games in the dark. Some examples of these are: Sardines (One person hides and everyone looks for them, when you find them you join them. Last person to find the group is on); Sock out (Everyone wears socks. Turn the lights off and you have to tackle people, remove their socks and then put them on your feet. When the lights come back on, the person with the most socks on his feet is the winner. Turn on. Turn off…)

**(20) FUJI FIND**

Give each group a camera and a set of things they need to find. This is a scavenger hunt of the technical age! Have them take pictures of their group with all of the objects to be found. Or you can be more specific (A member of your group by a toilet sign, your group (-1) behind bars, one member of your group under a red car holding a leaf.) The first group to get them all wins!

**(21) RELAY QUIZ**

Have a series of activities or obstacles (sink all the balls on the pool table, THEN unlock a series of locks with a bunch of keys, THEN throw a certain number of pieces of paper into a bin far away, THEN build a human pyramid, THEN recite all the books of the Bible… – you can do WHATEVER!) that have to be completed in a certain order, and a prize that is the incentive to complete these activities. Split the teens into groups or they can play in pairs or as individuals, depending on the size of the youth.

Then have them answer a series of questions, split into 3 questions at a time on a certain topic (geography; movies stars; maths; recent events etc.) The first group to answer the first series of questions correctly gets a minute to get AS FAR AS THEY CAN in the series of obstacles. When the time is up, you ask the next set of questions. Whichever group gets that set of questions correct the fastest, gets to pick up where the previous group left off in the series of activities and gets a minute to do as much as they can.

This continues until all the activities are completed, and whichever group finishes the last activity wins! This keeps everyone involved the whole way through, as you don’t have to have done well throughout the game in order to win.

**(22) GUY-GIRL EVENING**

We do a guys-girls evening once a term, where we split the guys and girls up, not necessarily looking at a topic specific to guys or girls, but from their perspective. The last one we did, the girls had a CHOCOLATE night, which went down awesomely! We played the chocolate game, ‘Smarties-or-the-box’, and had a choc fondue!!! For the guys, we hired a jumping castle boxing ring with giant soft gloves and had boxing matches. Everyone loved it!

**(23) SPORTS EVENING**

This is an easy evening to organize, if you have space! Set out different sports (touch rugby, soccer, basketball, rounders, dodgeball etc) to run simultaneously. Have teams register in teams of 5, and allow them to join any sport at any time. The winning team of each sport stays on, and the losing team moves off for another team to replace. The team that stays the longest on each sport is the winning team.

**(24) [YOUR AREA’S NAME]’S GOT TALENT**

This can be done as formally or informally as you like. Get people to register, audition and to perform to see who in your group or community has talent. If you want to go big, you can do auditions for a couple of weeks, and then have the final 15 acts perform! Advertise in schools; get famous or semi-famous people to judge; get a great MC; sell tickets; share the gospel after the interval – it is a great outreach programme to teens and their families.

**(25) PIMP MY KHAYA**

This is a great outreach programme. Find a family or a couple of families in a community nearby, whose houses need to be renovated. Find out what their needs are and try to get the necessary materials brought by your teens or sponsored. Get your teens to bring paint brushes, gardening tools, mops etc and spend some time cleaning, painting and fixing these houses!!!

**(26) SNAKES AND LADDERS**

Make a giant snakes and ladders board (numbered blocks, 1-100 or 1-50), big enough for people to stand in, and accompany that with a giant dice. Use real ladders (that they move up), and material or long beanbags as the snakes (that they move down). Also put different forfeits on different squares (stand on one leg til your next turn; sing a nursery rhyme til your next turn; cluck like a chicken til your next turn…) Get the teams or individuals to roll and move – makes for a very funny and loud environment. (Make sure you have a microphone or loudspeaker.) The winner is the one who gets to the top of the board first.

**(27) STYLE BY JURY**

Each group, the week before this programme, draws a style out of a hat. (preppy, jock, skater, goth, hillbilly…) and then that group must bring stuff to dress someone up in that style to following week. The actual week of the programme, people arrive and have time to dress their group member up. Have a panel of judges, and then have a competition to see who fitted the profile best. (You could do this all in one night, if you are willing and able to source all of the stuff yourself; or everyone having the same style would also work!)

**(28) LAUGH OUT LOUD**

If you have a projector or TV and a computer, this is an easy and great programme. Simply download a bunch of funny clips from the internet; or use clips from Takeshi’s Castle, and show them for a part of the evening. It’s just a great programme to be together and laugh together!

**(29) PROTECT IT**

This is also known as an ‘egg drop’. You give each group of teens a packet of materials (string, a packet, a balloon, some tissues etc) and they have to make some way of protecting an egg that will be dropped from the roof of your church. Then have the actual drop – where a leader will drop the eggs in their ‘protection’ (what was just made) from the roof. The egg that is the least cracked wins!

**(30) TOP GEAR**

Split the group into teams. Each team is to be given a trolley to pimp out. Then each team, armed with a camera is to produce a 5 min ‘Top Gear’ episode as to why their trolley is the best trolley. Categories could include a timed lap around a set circuit, a drifting category etc.

**(31) ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A 5TH GRADER?**

This is run the same as the TV show. Get a couple of 5th grade kids from your church to be the guests, and let your youth compete against them. Find a 5th grade teacher, and ask them to set 20 questions for you that the 5th graders have learnt already that year. Ask the questions, and see if your teens are smarter or not. If your group is bigger, put the teens in groups, and allow each group to answer the questions. (A laminated piece of paper, non-permanent marker, some toilet paper and water work well for this.)

**(32) PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN**

Get the teens to dress up South African. Have South African foods (boerewors, pap, vetkoek…), décor and activities (rugby, sakkie-ing…) and spend the evening enjoying our different cultures. You can screen some of those Leon Schuster funnies, have kwaito music playing; and can use the activities as competitions or just for fun.

**(33)** **SURVIVOR GAMES**

Survivor has loads of challenges that are reproducible! Watch a couple of episodes and use some of the challenges for an evening. Get people to move from challenge to challenge, and allow them to try them out! Some ideas: Standing on a chair with wrist tied to a bucket and held in the air. When they drop their arm, the water in the bucket will fall on them; Play ‘chase’ through an obstacle course with people tied together; provide teams with a lot of beams of wood and rope. Give each team 5 minutes to make an obstacle for the other team to get through; and then have a race to get through the obstacles!

**(34) GROUP PILLOW FIGHTS**

This is pillow fighting to the extreme, and without the potential concussions! Give the groups a bunch of cable ties, and tell them they have to connect their whole team together – they can do this however (ankles, wrists, elbows…). Once the teams are connected, they have pillow fights. This is hilarious, great fun, and it puts weak and strong on a similar level.

**(35) COLLABORATION**

You could use this concept with loads of projects, but the idea is to include everyone in your youth to make something together. Whether it is a giant paper mache something, or a huge pizza – you could even go for a world record!! We drew up an enormous map of Africa, and cut it into smaller squares. We gave each square to a group with only the outlines drawn on it, and they designed that square – using greens, blues and purples for the ocean parts, and reds, yellows and oranges for the land parts. We allowed the squares to dry; sewed it together and showed it to them the following week! Great for artier kids, and for a sense of unity!

**(36) SO YOU THINK Y[OUR GROUP] CAN DANCE?**

Dancing is huge in some youths, but whether it is or not in your group, you could make this work. Write different styles of dancing (hip hop, ballet, crumping, jazz, tap, gum boot…) onto different pieces of paper, and get the teens in groups to pick a paper out of a hat. Give them a CD with a minute clip of that style of music and get them to perform something. You can do this all in one night, or you can allow them to select the week before, and then perform the next week. (If you do that, allow for people who may not have been there the week before.) Get some judges and some costumes – provides for a great and sometimes funny evening.

**(37) MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**

This is a giant treasure hunt, ultimately leading to a person who is hiding (very well!!). Have different activities giving them a part of a map, or some sort of a clue that will lead them to the person. The first group to find the person wins!

**(38) COMBINED YOUTH EVENT**

Connect with all the other youth groups in your community and have a programme with them, at a church or a school hall, if a church is not big enough. You can do any programme. The main benefit is that teens get to meet other Christians; it encourages them to know they are not alone; and to see other people from their school who are Christians.

**(39) HOUSE ARREST**

This is similar to big brother, but run only for a day. You most likely will need a huge incentive. Get selected contestants to arrive earlier in the afternoon and put them in a small room (a cry room works well) and have a video camera with a live feed to your youth venue set up, so that the rest of the teens can see what is going on inside the room when they arrive. This is hugely important so that everyone is involved. As the afternoon/evening goes on, have different competitions and votes (inside and outside the room) to see who has to leave the room. The last person in the room is the winner.

**(40) STREET PARTY**

Hold this event outside – play music from the back of a car, have basketball compos (tricks and 1-on-1); get guys to dance; put out some skate ramps; have some walls covered with paper and have a graffiti competition with spray paint etc. You can run this evening formally, but informal seems to work better – eg. Still have the compos, but print out some number cards, and get kids who are on the sidelines to judge by holding numbers up.

**(41) BANQUET**

A formal, dress up dinner/dance is always a good programme for a special occasion, for the end of the year, or just for fun. Decorate your hall, choose a theme, sell tickets, organize some dinner and get teens to dress up formally. Throw in a photo booth! It especially goes down well with the girls.

**(42) SING-IT-ON!**

This idea is taken from ‘Noot vir noot’ on TV. You cut songs into 30 seconds, 15 seconds, 10 seconds and 5 second segments. You play the song and they have to tell you what the song is and who sings it. You give points for the song and the artist. For the second round, you can use pictures that represent the name of a song – show the pictures and the team must guess the name of the song. (E.g. a picture of a builder, a tea cup and some butter – ‘Build me up, buttercup’.) Team with the highest points wins.

**(43) PHOTO SHOP**

This is another camera programme, but one without competition. Give the groups phrases to interpret and take pictures of (family portrait, Best ROCKSTAR photo, Most Extreme photo, Upside down photo, Horse face photo, Biggest Pout Pic, Nerdiest Photo etc). You can give prizes to the most original.

**(44) WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?**

This is taken from the game show. Make a powerpoint and come up with some questions. Add some dramatic lighting, a game show host, and you have yourself a great programme.

**(45) T-PARTY (OR YOU CAN CHOOSE ANY LETTER OF THE ALPHABET)**

Have a dress up party, where the teens have to dress up with something beginning with a T. (teacher, tortoise, tomato, teenage hero ninja turtle…) We then had a tea party, with some cakes and tea – went down way better than expected. (If you use a different letter of the alphabet, you can use a different activity, or simply have a party.)

**(46) DON’T FORGET THE LYRICS**

Get kids who want to enter to sign up, and then compete in pairs. Play a song, and get the 2 competitors to sing along. About 20 seconds into the singing, cut the song, and the aim is to see which of the 2 competitors can keep singing the longest, without messing up the tune or the words. The winner goes through to the next round, the loser is out. Get the winners then to compete against each other until you get to your final winner!

Or you can play it in teams and each round you have a new person up from your team to sing along. If they get the next line they get 10 points. Each round you can knock one or a few teams out depending on the amount you have until you get to a final team. The last team standing has to do a difficult last song to be declared the winner.

You can cut songs before the program using a program called audiocity or just stop songs at a certain time on the CD player. Put the words on to power point. Be careful of what songs you choose as there is a lot of stuff out there that is not usable for a youth programme.

**(47) YOUTH GROUP RAID**

Only do this if you have spoken to the youth leader from the other group first, and have them on board. But you can pile everyone into cars (get adults from your church to help) or in a bus armed with water balloons and dressed in camo gear, if you want to go overboard! You can either surprise the other youth (only the leader would know); or they can be in on it as well (the leader at the other youth can tell them they’re coming, and be ready for a ‘counter attack’). Have a water balloon fight, and then spend the rest of the evening together. There more often than not will be a ‘retaliation’ event, so this is 2 events in one!

**(48) EXTREME PANCAKES**

Get your small groups to all chill making pancakes. After a while, start with the challenges: Craziest toppings; Best designed; Most flips; Highest flip; Best trick – like triple flip double spin catch it behind your back; Longest flip – the record (so far) is 25 meters!

**(49) PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT**

Down load pictures of a deck of cards from [http://www.cliparts101.com](http://www.cliparts101.com/) then put them in a PowerPoint. Arrange the cards in sections of five cards. The idea of the game is that the teens are shown a card on the screen and then they have to decided if the next card is higher or lower, if they get five correct answers they get a prize. If they get one wrong they are out, and the next person has a chance at two prizes and so on.

**(50) EATING COMPETITION**

 Have an evening where you try to break eating records. Here are the actual WORLD records which you can show the teens and then have people come up and see how close they get. This could be an expensive and rather messy evening!

Vienna - 3.8kg in 10 mins; Baked Beans – 2.7 kg in 1 Min 47 Sec; Mash Potatoes - 1.3 kg in 1 min 22 sec; Cabbage – 3.1 in 9 min;;Candy Bars – 0.9 kg in 6 min; Chocolate – 0.7 kg in 7 min; Eggs – 65 in 6 min; French fries – 2 kg in 6 min; Green Beans – 1.2 kg in 6 min; Water Melon – 13.22 kg in 15 min; Sweet Corn – 34 ears in 12 min; Ice cream 7.12 L – 12 min.

**51) CAR BASHING**

Get an old, broken, bashed up car from a dump or a scrap yard, and let guys trash it… or even better, let them make it into a piece of art, by using hammers, spraypaint, pieces of metal etc. You could even use it as an advertising board for youth, or a camp or event.

**52) WII SPORTS**

If you could get hold of a Nintendo WII, or more than one, you could do an indoor sports tournament. WII tenpin bowling, tennis etc. Sign people up, and have round robin tournament!

Remembering that these programmes are only A PART of ministry, take encouragement from the following quotes from other youth leaders around the world:

**‘In youth work, we have mistakenly assumed that the best way to relate to young people is to provide them with various forms of entertainment. Maybe instead we should invite them to become heroes and change the world.’ [Les Christie]**

**‘How many of us are looking for the latest youth ministry gadget to pull off in our meetings? ‘We’ve got to keep up with the world!’ And what our kids really need is to sit down and have somebody listen to them. Just sit right across from them and give them total attention without all these distractions.’ [Sam Hesteroff]**

**‘Change your programming from safe entertainment to risky, ministry-oriented activities. You don’t test the resources of God until you undertake the impossible.’ [Seth Barnes]**

Use these programmes as tools to aid the REAL ministry which happens when we RELY ON GOD; when we LOVE and LISTEN and RISK and LEAD and LIVE and TEACH and SERVE and then LOVE SOME MORE!

A special thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition. If you would like to contribute to the next one, or if you have questions, please e-mail me on debbie@westvillebaptist.co.za.

**God bless you as you minister to the youth in South Africa!!**

*Loads of love, Deb!*

**‘I have no clue what the end result will be with my kids. But I know that the laboring itself has to become the joy. The certainty that God’s word never returns to Him void, that’s the joy. Everything else is a bonus.’ [Philip McClure]**