

THE YOUTH PROGRAM OF JARO EVANGELICAL CHURCH 1994-2011

A Special Paper

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Where are the youth?”. “We have no more youth choir members”. “We have no more youth volunteers for our Sunday School teachers”. “We have only a few youth in our young people’s fellowship!”.

These are some of the questions and remarks we often hear from many church Pastors, Sunday School superintendents and Youth workers under the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. These questions stem from the observation that many of our young people are no longer interested in joining church activities. It seems that church has become irrelevant to them, finding no use for its activities and services. For some, church attendance is an unwanted imposition from parents who are church goers and who have strong feelings about the importance of the church. Some teen-agers and their parents look at church as a reformatory center where they can seek refuge in case they are confused or troubled. Their understanding is that they will become changed persons if they join church activities.

However, in my experience at Jaro Evangelical Church (JEC) for close to 17 years now, I have found out that this is not always the case.

JEC holds the distinction of being the First Baptist Church in the Philippines. From this church have come many youth leaders in the National, Provincial, City wide organizations not only related to church but in school and community as well. Their level of involvement, leadership positions and organizations will be mentioned in later chapters. It is also important to note that they came from JEC’s Youth organization.

a. Significance of the Study

This special paper is written in order to put into writing the experiences of Rev. Martha Mae Encila Luces, Minister for Formation of Children and Youth (Minister, for brevity) of Jaro Evangelical Church. She has been the lead facilitator of the JEC Youth program from the time she was called by the church seventeen (17) years ago up to the present. She is supported by the Board of Christian Education which is composed of six (6) members. These Board members work together in the implementation of the Christian Education (CE) program of the Church covering the following thrusts: Ministry to Adults, Ministry to Family, Ministry to Children & Youth and Church Arts and Music. Under this Board, the Minister is called to closely work in Ministering the Children and Youth as a coordinator of the Church approved programs.

The Minister also works with the Pastoral team of the church to address problems affecting the children and youth and other church activities where the youth and children are involved.

This special paper aims to put into writing the lessons gained from seventeen (17) years of working at JEC handling the Children and Youth ministry. There are learning experiences which could be raised to the level of principles. The Minister finds the result of this endeavor to be a rich material that can be shared with other co-workers or pastors who have the same vision in their respective churches. Many youth workers met by the writer expressed the same difficulties of handling church youth particularly the initial steps in developing a youth program in a local church. This paper can also be used to compliment the youth programs currently implemented by the National, Provincial and City-wide church organizations. The writer finds it important that JEC documents the

historical development of its youth program. It is true that no minister will remain in her local church forever but it is comforting to know that the work done for the Lord in that church remains recorded. Systematic writing of experiences will provide the church with guidelines for the implementation of youth programs in the future.

Lastly, this paper is an attempt by the writer to share her personal evaluation or self-assessment of her performance as a youth worker. She admits that her experience at JEC is an unprecedented responsibility because she has not experienced this kind of ministry for Youth & Children in a city church. She also recognizes that each written principle, each activity done, and lessons learned are results of the joint efforts of the whole church as the implementing body. It is a humble acknowledgment of the church's wholehearted support, patient guidance of her mentors, and the great faithfulness of a loving and merciful God that has made her experience worthwhile.

b. Objectives of the Study

This paper intends to achieve the following objectives:

b.1) To describe the youth program of Jaro Evangelical Church: This includes an overview describing the youth population, its activities and ministries, the analysis and findings on the impact of involvement and relationship of the whole youth ministry within the framework of the Vision, Mission and Goals of Jaro Evangelical Church;

b.2) To identify principles that guided the implementation of these programs: From the learning experiences, lessons learned and process of implementation, the Minister will identify principles that have guided the youth ministry; and

b.3) To recommend approaches and activities for youth ministry: This is a listing of activities under each specific program which were implemented in the JEC Youth organization.

c. Scope and Limitation

This paper shall describe the youth program of Jaro Evangelical Church under the leadership of the Minister for Formation of Children and Youth (Minister, for brevity) starting 1994-2011. This would mean that this paper will contain seventeen (17) years of experience of working with youth groups of Jaro Evangelical Church.