A Survey of Christian Youth Related to
The Church of Christ in Thailand
(A Draft)

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Aims of the Study
The primary aim of this study is to understand young people in the church better. This survey reports on their background, their faith, their experience of the church, and the consequences of their faith in their values and their activity in society.

By gathering information from young people, this study will assist in:
1. developing appropriate evangelistic activities;
2. ensuring that church life is appropriate for the young people;
3. developing programs of Christian education.

This study is part of a larger study of religious faith among young people in Thailand. This study is parallel to studies in Australia that have been carried out under the title of ‘The Spirit of Generation Y’ by a group of researchers at Monash University, the Australian Catholic University and the Christian Research Association. The study also has some parallels with a study conducted in the United States of America by Christian Smith. Hence, this study will contribute to the picture of young people and their faith in several contexts around the world.

The larger study is being carried out in association with Dr. Parichart Suwunbubbha of Mahidol University. The results of the larger study will be presented in a separate report.

Rev Dr Philip Hughes, the senior research officer of the Christian Research Association of Australia, has been an adviser both to this project and to the general study.

Ach. Janram Chaisri has been responsible for conducting the survey of youth groups in Thailand and for the general survey in the north of Thailand.

Methodology
The general study of religious faith among the young people of Thailand had two stages. The first involved intensive interviews which were conducted among 80 young people from a variety of backgrounds. These interviews were conducted mostly by A. Janram in 2005. These interviews were important in listening to the language, the ideas and the attitudes of a variety of young people and in understanding the ways that they think and approach religion. However, such a qualitative study cannot provide us with generalisable results.

A second stage aimed at gathering generalisable results through the use of surveys. It was decided at this point that it would be helpful for the churches if a special questionnaire was designed and used among young people in the youth groups throughout Thailand. This special questionnaire, which is the focus of this report, was constructed in conjunction with a questionnaire for use with young people from different religious backgrounds.

The two questionnaires, for the general population and for the youth groups, had many questions in common. The commonality will allow for comparisons to be made between those young people
who attend the Christian youth groups and the wider population.

**Formation of the Questionnaires**
The questionnaires cover the nature of religion in its major forms, as has been identified by Glock and Stark. These include:
1. Public practices
2. Private practices
3. Beliefs – both in terms of content and nature of belief
4. Salience of religion
5. Experiences.
In addition, questions were asked about the functioning of religion in terms of the ways that young people found it to be important to them.

They have also looked at several major consequences of religious belief:
1. Personal wellbeing
2. Values
3. Social involvement.

These basic components of the questionnaires are common to those used by Christian Smith in his large-scale analysis of young people in the United States and by the 'Spirit of Generation Y' project in Australia conducted by the Christian Research Association, Monash University and the Australian Catholic University.

To the questionnaire for young people in youth groups, a range of specific additional questions were developed in consultation with Ach. Kummool of the Ministry of Family Life about:
1. religious background
2. encouragements and discouragements in faith
3. experiences of church activities
4. interests in Christian education.

The specific content of questionnaires was developed by Janram Chaisri, Dr. Parichart Suwanbubba and Rev Dr Philip Hughes drawing on several sources:
1. The interviews conducted in stage 1. We aimed to include the variety of responses found in the interviews in the questionnaires in order to see how widely generalised those responses were.
2. Comparable USA and Australian questionnaires. The Australian National Telephone survey conducted as part of 'The Spirit of Generation Y' project and other sub-projects conducted in schools provided some questions. The Australian National Telephone survey, in turn, drew on the survey of youth in the USA conducted by Christian Smith. These comparable questions make it possible to look at cross-cultural comparisons.
3. Prior research undertaken on the religion of young people in Thailand, including the surveys done by Philip Hughes for his doctorate and then in the study of religion and technological development in 1996. The survey of values uses the methodology and content of Milton Rokeach, as re-developed by Shalom Schwartz and, in Thailand, Suntaree Komin, of the NIDA institute. The wording of the values uses the work of Suntaree Komin.

**General Methodology for the Distribution of Questionnaires**
In both USA and Australia, the core surveys have been done in the form of telephone interviews. Those interviewed were selected randomly by random digit dialing. When a phone call was answered, the interviewer would ask if there was someone in the house of the appropriate age group who might be interviewed. Parents were asked for permission to interview young people under the
age of 16. However, in order to ensure adequate cover of the relevant age groups in Australia, a quota of 400 young people in each of three age groups was specified. This had the advantage of ensure adequate coverage of these age groups, but to give an accurate national picture, a system of weighting was used, based on Census results.

While providing good samples of responses from young people of each of these age groups, it is evident that the total sample would not be representative of the population between 13 and 24 because of the uneven spread in age of the questionnaires. In order to provide an accurate national picture of young people in Australia, the sample was then weighted in accord with Census figures for age and gender to provide an accurate national picture.

In Australia, this core study has been supplemented by a range of additional studies which have targeted particular populations at the request of various clients. These surveys have all used stratified sampling methods. Schools were chosen that represented different socio-economic areas. Classes within schools were chosen in order to ensure the coverage of different age groups.

A similar method was used in Thailand. Random sampling is almost impossible in Thailand where only some people have a landline phone. The only possible way is by actually visiting people in their villages and cities.

Hence, it is necessary to use stratified sampling methods which choose particular groups according to pre-determine categories. These categories are chosen keeping in mind possible variations that may be important to the end results.

In the questionnaire for the youth groups, it was important to cover all districts of the church. The proportions of young people in the various districts varies considerably. For example, one district contains 30 per cent of all young people in the CCT churches in Thailand while several other districts only contain 0.5 per cent of the young people.

The stratified sampling method has the major and important advantage that it would ensure that all parts of the church were covered, including those areas (such as the south of Thailand) where there are comparatively few young people who are part of the church. Thus, it provides a sample in which regional and ethnic differences can be properly examined. This could not have occurred through a randomised sampling method without using a very large random sample of many thousands of young people.

However, the raw sample does not represent accurately the total picture of young people in the CCT churches. In order to produce this picture accurately, it is necessary to weight the sample so that it accurately represents the total picture. The weighting is constructed from a comparison of the sample with the official statistics of members (among young people) from the CCT. Having calculated the proportion of young people in each of the following regions from the CCT figures: northern, northeastern, southern, central, Karen and Lahu, the questionnaire sample can be weighted to reflect the same proportions. Hence, an accurate national picture can be obtained.

**Responses to the Distribution of Questionnaires to Youth Groups**

It had been determined that questionnaires could be distributed to young people gathering at the Youth Camp of CCT in Bangkok in March 2006. It was noted that this meeting would be representative of a wide range of young people from the churches across Thailand. Ninety-seven questionnaires were completed at this event.
It was necessary to complement this event by sending questionnaires to young people in churches in every district across Thailand. Because of the large number of districts and their diversity in terms of location and ethnic background, this process would ensure a very wide coverage of the young people throughout Thailand covering all areas and all major ethnic groups.

A. Janram sent questionnaires to 24 churches in 11 districts. Different numbers were sent to different churches according to the number of young people each church thought they would be able to ask to complete the surveys. In the other 8 districts, questionnaires were sent to the district office for distribution to local churches. Altogether 820 questionnaires were distributed.

Questionnaires have been received from 18 churches in 9 districts as well as from another 2 districts as well as those that were completed at the Bangkok youth conference. The total number of questionnaires received by 4th July was 452. The response rate from those questionnaires distributed to churches is close to 50 per cent. This would generally be considered to be an excellent response rate and sufficient for a reliable picture of all the young people in the youth groups of the CCT churches in Thailand.

Analysis
Analysis was done using SPSS. The focus of the analysis is what does the information say to the churches? What is it useful to learn from the responses? In many areas, looking at the frequencies of responses is what is most important. Understanding the various influences on young people and how they think is apparent in the analysis of the frequencies.

However, the analysis is also looking at the various groups who responded to the questionnaire and the points at which they differ. For example, we are examining the differences between:

1. Males and females
2. People of different age groups
3. Rural, suburban and city people
4. People of different educational backgrounds
5. People from different regions and ethnic backgrounds.

Differences that are statistically significant (at 95% level of significance or greater) and differences that are significant for the understanding of the churches are being noted.

The Young People in the CCT
According to the 2000 National Population Census, there were close to 100,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 who were identified as Christians throughout the nation of Thailand. Of these:

- 61.1% lived in the north
- 16.5% in the north-east
- 1.5% in the south
- 11.8% in the centre, and
- 9.02% in Bangkok.

Overall, the Christian young people made up 0.93% of the total population of 10 to 19 year olds in Thailand. There is a higher proportion of Christian young people than there of Christians in the population as a whole. As a whole, Christians make up 0.8% of the total population.

The proportions of young people who are Christian varies considerably from one area to another as show in the following table.
Table 1. Numbers of Young People Aged 10 to 19 Identified as Christian in the 2000 National Population Census of Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Numbers of Christian Young People</th>
<th>Numbers of Young People in the Population</th>
<th>Percent of Population who are Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>59,179</td>
<td>1,867,587</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-east</td>
<td>16,009</td>
<td>3,755,703</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1,448</td>
<td>1,552,332</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>11,468</td>
<td>2,270,689</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>8,731</td>
<td>924,668</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>96,835</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,370,979</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These young people are associated with a variety of denominations. Some are Catholic and some are associated with the CCT. According to the statistics published by the Church of Christ in Thailand, there were a total of 36,076 young people associated with the 19 districts in the 16 to 30 age group. This equates to about 24,050 young people in our 'target' age group of 15 to 24. In other words, about 25 per cent of all young people identified as Christian by the national Census are members of the Church of Christ in Thailand. These young people are found in the following districts.

Table 2: Numbers of Young People Aged 16 to 30 Associated with the CCT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Estimated Numbers 15 to 24 in 2006</th>
<th>Total Numbers in District</th>
<th>Percent of Young People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>9393</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3107</td>
<td>16768</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>2108</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>2516</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>2765</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>2768</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1340</td>
<td>6992</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>4882</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2236</td>
<td>10787</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>2051</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>1321</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>2478</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>3253</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>1273</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3453</td>
<td>15986</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7175</td>
<td>34012</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,050</strong></td>
<td><strong>121499</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a rough approximation, based on the location and ethnicity of the districts, this means that:

- 34.6% are northern Thai
- 10.6% are central Thai
- 1.6% are southern Thai
- 1.6% are eastern Thai,
- 37.2% are Karen, and
- 14.4% are Lahu.

Our surveys were sent out to two or three churches in each district to ensure that we had a wide coverage of all young people in the churches of the CCT. It also ensured that we adequately covered rural and urban areas, and young people with different educational, occupational and ethnic backgrounds. However, it did not ensure that our sample matched the national picture. In order to obtain an accurate national picture, we weighted the sample according to the above approximation of locality and ethnicity in order to accurately reflect the national picture of young people in youth groups throughout Thailand.

According to the weighted sample,

- 43% live in rural areas,
- 21% in suburban areas, and
- 35% in the cities.

- 44% are currently studying at secondary school
- 7% are doing 11th form
- 7% are doing 12th form
- 5% are doing a certificate or diploma
- 26% are doing a bachelor degree,
- 2% are studying at higher levels.
- 11% are not studying.

It is notable that many young people are studying at university levels. It is possible that such young people have been more willing to fill in questionnaires. On the other hand, it is also possible that the churches encourage young people to go as far as they can in their education.

Of the young people,

- 53% were at a government school or college
- 32% were at a private school
- 2% were at a Catholic school and
- 8% were at a Protestant school,
- 5% were studying elsewhere, and
- 11% were not studying.

As is true in most church environments, there are more girls than boys among the young people associated with the CCT. 58% are girls and 41% are boys.

**Religious Background and Conversion**

The questionnaire asked young people whether they had always been Christian from birth, whether they had converted one or other religion or spiritual beliefs, or whether they were still deciding. It was found that:
• 71.8% had always been a Christian
• 13.8% had converted from Buddhism
• 0% had converted from Islam
• 1.4% had converted from spirit beliefs
• 1.6% had converted from something else
• 3.0% were still deciding whether will be a Christian.

About 10% did not answer this question. It seems likely that some of these people were not quite sure whether they were Christians or not, perhaps including some who had grown up as Christians. This shows that while the large portion of young people in the youth groups have grown up in Christian families, around 15 per cent have converted from other religions or beliefs, mostly from Buddhism, and perhaps up to another 15 per cent are not sure whether they are Christian or not. This suggests that the youth groups themselves have an evangelistic function as well as assisting young people in their growth in faith.

The following table summarises some of the characteristics of those who are converted compared with those who have grown up in Christian homes.

Table 3: Young People Associated with the CCT Comparing Converts with Those Born in Christian Homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of Converted</th>
<th>Percent Grown up in Christian Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a government school</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a Protestant school</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in the city</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in the suburbs</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in rural areas</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged under 17</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 18 to 20</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 21 to 24</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 25 and over</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Thai</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Thai</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Thai</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern Thai</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above suggests that girls more than boys have converted to the Christian faith. Most of the conversions are occurring in the rural areas, particularly in central, northeastern and southern Thailand, rather than in the city areas. While the church is strong among northern Thai, it has the lowest proportions of converts in it.
Conversions are occurring mainly in the final years of secondary school, among young people under the age of 17. There appears to be a particular dearth of young people in the 21 to 24 age group who are converts.

There is evidence of some impact from Christian schools in that there are relatively high proportions of young people who have attended a Christian school who have converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, many converts have attended a government school. We asked those who had converted to Christianity what had been the influences on them. These are summarised in the following figure.

Eighty-eight young people answered the question about what were the influences in their conversion.

As shown in the graph, the most important influences are:
- reading the Bible
- evangelistic meetings, and
- worship at church.

The responses indicate that for most people who have been converted, all three have been major influences on them becoming Christians. It may indicate that no one of these influences by themselves is sufficient. While an evangelistic meeting may be the point at which a person comes
face to face with occasion for making a decision about faith, it will be the longer-term involvement in worship in the church along with study of the Bible that will help that person to fully enter into their new faith.

For many young people the Christian books or tracts also play a part. For some, family members can have a significant influence. They are far more likely to be of influence than are friendships. Schools play a part, as has been noted above, but not a major part in the conversion of young people.

**Discouragements and encouragements in being a Christian and attending church**

Whether one has grown up in a Christian family or has converted from another faith, there are various discouragements and encouragements in being a Christian. Three questions explored these. The first question had to do with general encouragements in faith. The second question had to do with discouragements in participating in the life of the church. The third question had to do more explicitly with the experiences young people have in their churches. In each case, young people were presented with a range of options and asked whether each of these had been helpful in encouraging or discouraging them or had been true in their own experience.

**Encouragements in Faith**
The major encouragements in faith are summarised in the following figure.

![Encouragements in Being a Christian Among Young People in Christian Youth Groups](image)

*Source: Youth Group Survey 2006*
What encourages young people most in their Christian faith is the experience of God's forgiveness and the security they find in God. The second factor is closely related: the personal experience of God in their lives. Most young people see God as active in the world and in their lives. Many can point to specific experiences where God has given them protection or saved them from danger. Forgiveness is not so much an experience of being forgiven for specific deeds that they have done, but God's deliverance and care which constantly keeps them secure and safe in a world which can be chaotic and dangerous.

Secondarily, the teaching of Christianity is important to them. What is important is probably not so much the doctrines themselves in terms of describing the essence of faith, but the moral teaching, the teaching about how to live.

Young people have generally grouped three other things together: the Bible, Church worship and the teaching of Jesus. They have generally responded to these in similar ways. They tend to be particularly important to those who attend church frequently.

The faith of family members and of friends are of lesser importance to them than their own experiences and their own involvements in the life of the church and reading of the Bible. They were found to be of greater importance to the older members of youth groups rather than the younger, and of those who had always been Christian rather than those who had been converted.

Youth group was very important in encouraging many young people in their Christian faith. However, it was most significant for those who were also attending worship regularly. In other words, the youth group appears to be build on the worship of the church and involvement in the life of the church. It is certainly not seen as an alternative way of being involved. And it appeals less to those who are on the edge of church life.

There was a tendency for it to be affirmed particularly by older young people, over the age of 20, rather than those under the age of 17. It was affirmed a little more by girls than by boys. Overall, about 14 per cent of young people were sceptical of its value. However, in the Central region, about 23 per cent felt it had little or only some value. This may be a reflection more of how different the Central young people are compared with those in other parts of Thailand. It does not mean that the youth leaders are not doing a good job. These young people tend to have somewhat different values, being a little more independent in their thinking. For these young people, different sorts of programs and activities may be necessary to encourage them more in their faith.

**Discouragements**

The most commonly cited discouragement to attending church activities is that the parents not attending. Young people are evidently more likely to attend if their parents attend. The second factor that many young people find that their responsibilities in work and study conflict with attendance at church. They often find themselves with responsibilities that take precedence. Almost one quarter of all young people said that conflict with work or study was a very important or the most important reason why they were sometimes unable to participate in church activities.

However, there are a range of problems that young people experience in the churches themselves. There are conflicts and hypocrisy, and sometimes young people feel uncomfortable or unwelcomed in the churches. Approximately 20 per cent of young people cite these as major reasons why they do not attend.
The discouragement that is associated with the way young people experience the church is greatest among young people living in the suburbs of Bangkok, but also among the Lahu. It is found a little more among girls than among boys, and more among those under 17 years of age. However, it should be noted that there is not a high level of discrimination in the responses of the young people. Those who feel negatively about the churches tend to feel negatively in every way. They feel uncomfortable and unwelcomed. They tend to see more readily the problems, the conflicts and the hypocrisy. They also tend to be those young people whose parents and friends are not attending. They are more likely to take up work or study commitments that conflict with their involvement in church activities.

Discouragements in Attending Church Activities
Among Young People in Youth Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Most important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents not go</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrisy</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not comfortable</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems in church</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral teaching</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped not started</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends not go</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not welcomed</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play sport</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church boring</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubts about beliefs</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved house</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few young people are discouraged by Christian beliefs. There are few young people who feel that they cannot accept the basic beliefs that are taught. It is a little more likely that they will find the moral teaching of the churches difficult to handle. For example, some find the prohibition of alcohol and smoking difficult to reconcile with their own habits. However, the results suggest that only a few of those in the youth groups feels this way. There may, of course, be others who have left the youth groups because their ways of life did not accord with the teaching of the churches.

There is just a small group of young people who feel that church involvement is not necessary and that church activities are boring. While these are major issues for young people in the West, they are not major issues for young people in Thailand.
Other more minor issues include friends not attending church and sporting activities.

**Experience of Church Life**

While there are some issues about the social atmosphere and the acceptance of young people in the churches, most young people are very positive about their experiences of worship. Two-thirds of them say that they always feel close to God in worship. Similar proportions say that they find the singing uplifting, they feel their faith is growing and they receive guidance for daily life through the worship services. A high proportion of those who say this does not always happen say that it often happens. Only 10 per cent of young people appear to be dissatisfied with their experiences in worship.

A larger proportion, however, sometimes feel that they are not accepted in the churches. Only 42 per cent indicated that they felt that they were always accepted. Just a little more than half indicated that they were always encouraged in their use of their gifts and skills. And only 41 per cent felt confident that they could always invite friends and family to worship with them. While this last question may reflect the fact that some have friends and family who do not attend, it may also reflect their confidence in the atmosphere at the church.

While girls, a little more than boys, feel positive about worship in the churches, there are few notable differences. The only factor which is quite evident is that those who attend worship weekly feel much more positive than those who attend worship only occasionally.
The Faith of Young People

Beliefs

In general, there is a strong belief in most basic Christian doctrines. Ninety per cent of young people in the youth groups affirm belief in God. They are equally sure that God is not a distance force, but a present reality. God changes things in their lives. Eighty per cent or more affirm belief in the divinity of Jesus and in heaven. However, only 60 per cent affirm belief in Jesus as a human being and in life after death.

It is interesting that there are quite a number of young people who are quite sure about Jesus as God, but are less sure about Jesus as a man. It is unlikely that this is a denial of the historicity of Jesus. Rather, it is the sense that, as God, Jesus could not really be fully human.

The doubt about life after death is a reminder that the focus of faith is the present reality of God in their lives. They value and seek for God working in their lives on a daily basis. Life beyond this one is not as important to them as what happens to them in the present.

A series of questions were also asked about other beliefs generally associated with Buddhism and with animism. The responses to these are shown in the figure below.
While most young people reject belief about re-birth and the impact of 'old' karma, there are many who are not sure. Indeed, about half reject the idea of re-birth while another third of young people are not sure whether it is true or not. The impact of karma on their lives is rejected by two-thirds of young people, but many are not sure about it.

While few definitely believe in astrology, about one-third of all young people are open to it. It might be true. Fewer young people believe in household spirits, amulets or fortune-tellers. Nevertheless, around one quarter of all young people are open to these possibilities. Those who are open to such beliefs are generally the younger people under 17 years of age, many of whom are still at school. Such openness is also more common among those who have been converted, as compared with those who have been brought up in Christian homes, and among those who attend infrequently.

Another set of questions explored more about the nature of faith. Most young people affirm strongly the possibility of miracles. There are few problems, as in the West, with belief in the supernatural, in the possibility of God's intervention in everyday life.

Religious beliefs are not as much an issue as they are in the West. A large majority (64%) indicated that they have no doubts about what to believe. Accompanying this was a ready acceptance of authority. For example, three-quarters of young people were ready to accept the authority of the pastors of the churches. On the other hand, it should be noted that a sizable minority indicated that
they did have doubts and confusion. One third of all young people were not sure about or indicate that they have doubts. About 25 per cent indicated they were confused and another 25 per cent were not sure whether they were confused or not.

There was not a clear relationship between confusion about beliefs and confusion about life. The people who said they were confused about what to believe were not necessarily those who said they were not sure about their purpose in life. On the other hand, those who were confused were often those who affirmed that they had experienced problems in life and God had not seemed to help them. Around 20 per cent affirmed such feelings, and an additional 20 per cent were not sure about them. These were often the people who were confused about their beliefs. Their experience had not validated their beliefs.

A couple of questions were asked about other religions. Most young people felt that it was good to learn about them, but there is a wide range of opinions about whether there was good in all religions.

**Practices**
One question explored the religious practices of young people: both private and public. Their responses are summarised in the following figure.
Prayer is the most frequent religious practice. About half of all young people said that they prayed daily. Many others pray at least every week. About one quarter of all young people said they read the Bible daily and another quarter did so at least once a week.

![Religious Practices Among Young People in CCT Youth Groups](chart)

About 75 per cent attend worship at least weekly and many do so more often than that. More than half also attend a youth group weekly and give to the church weekly. It was more common that those under 17 years of age would not be going to worship than older young people. There were also greater proportions of young people in the suburbs of Bangkok who did not attend than young people in other parts of the country.

There was a tendency for attendance at youth group to drop away somewhat among those in their twenties and particularly among university students. Young people in the north-east were less likely to attend youth group than those in other parts of the country. It is possible that youth group programs are not as well developed in that area.

The practice of fasting along with prayer is not nearly so common. A total of 10 per cent said they had done so occasionally or more often. Liberating animals for merit was just as common.
Experiences
Several different types of experiences were put to young people and they were asked if they had experienced them and how often. They were also given the option to say that they did not understand the experience. Their responses are summarised in the following figure.

Many young people feel that they have had answers to their prayers. More than three-quarters of all young people responding to the survey say this has happened more than once. They are experiencing God as real and interacting with them in their lives.

Many, too, have made commitments to God. Approximately two-thirds of all young people have experienced this. Similar proportions have felt that God has been speaking to them personally through the Bible and they have understood the message.

A little less then half of them affirmed that they had often had experiences of deep happiness and peace through their faith. An additional 27 per cent had had such an experience two or three times and others just once.

Almost three-quarters of the young people said that at one time or other, they had had the experience of a miracle from God. More than one-third of them had had such experiences several
times.

Young people were equally divided between those who had had an experience of communication with beings outside this world and those who had not. About 40 per cent affirmed that they had had such experiences. Another 40 per cent said they had never had such experiences, and 20 per cent were not sure what those experiences were.

Importance of Religion in Life
Young people were asked how important religious faith was to them.
54% said it was most important
20% that it was very important
9% that it was important
2% that it was of some importance, and
1% that it was not important.

Another 13 per cent of the young people did not answer the question. Perhaps many of these were not sure how important religious faith was to them, or did not want to say that it was not very important.
to rate the importance of a range of items. They were then asked which of the 12 items in the survey was the single most important. In this second question, they were only allowed to choose one option. The results from this second question have been combined with the overall assessments of each item in the following figure and are represented by the portion of those who chose the item as the single most important. This proportion has been subtracted from the percentage who said the item was 'most important' in order that an individual's responses are not represented twice in the figure.

The focus of faith for young people is the relationship they have with God. This was affirmed as very important by more than 80 per cent of all the young people who responded to the survey. Approximately 40 per cent of young people said that this was the single most important aspect of faith for them. This sense of relationship confirms what has been noted in terms of the importance of prayer and in the experiences of answers to prayer. It is also affirmed in the general importance of worship.

Religious faith contributes to happiness. Many young people believe that if they live in the ways that it describes, they will experience happiness, and, indeed, many young people indicate that they have experienced deep peace and happiness through their faith. That harmonious relationship with a God who cares about them, looks after them and forgives their wrong-doing also contributes to the sense of happiness.

Religious faith is a body of knowledge and a way of looking at the world and living life. As such, many young people affirmed strongly the sense of religious faith showing the meaning of life and providing teaching about life.

Religious faith is important in a range of other ways, although these were not affirmed as strongly. It provides solutions to the problems of suffering. It provides opportunities to help others, and, through the church, means whereby one may be helped oneself. This sense of community in which people help each other is important, but not as critical as the relationship with God or the teaching about life.

Many young people believe that religious faith is important for the nation as a whole. In the inner person, it also has its benefits. It can contribute to people have a cool heart, in controlling anger and emotion, while helping to make people stronger in themselves and more self-reliant.

Hope for the next life is not very important for most young people. Their focus is much more on this life than on the next.

**How Young People Cope with Life**

**How Young People Seek Happiness**

The questionnaire asked young people how satisfied they were with life as a whole and with various aspects of life. The indicated their satisfaction on a 7 point scale, from 'most satisfied' to 'not satisfied at all'. The figure below summarises the results.

Young people are most satisfied with their home life, although half of them are not very satisfied. They are least satisfied with their education and with life as whole. They are moderately satisfied with their spiritual lives, with 22 per cent indicating a high level of satisfaction, 29 per cent very satisfied, 26 per cent satisfied, and 23 per cent not very satisfied.

Analysis shows that three factors have a similar weight in terms of their overall satisfaction with
life: their satisfaction with home, friends, and their spirituality. To put it in other terms, a satisfaction life depends on harmony in the home, among friends and with God. Education has little impact on their general satisfaction with life.

Church attendance also makes no difference to their levels of satisfaction with life. Those who attend frequently are no more or less satisfied than those who attend occasionally.

The importance of religion for these young people is evident in their responses to the various ways of seeking peace and happiness. Prayer and going to church were strongly affirmed as very important ways of seeking peace and happiness by approximately 70 per cent of the young people. They were affirmed more strongly than any other options in the list. However, close to prayer and church was spending time with the family. One may perhaps interpret this as saying that what is most important to young people are their primary relationships: their relationship with God and their relationships with the family. If the harmony of these relationships, they find peace and happiness.

Also important, but affirmed as very important by a little less than half of the all the young people were listening to music and working or studying. Listening to music is very important to many young people as something which helps them to cope with their moods, that provides them with means of expressing how they feel, and, sometimes, in contributing to changes in their feelings.
Of importance to little less than 40 per cent of the young people were:
- exercise and sport
- spending time with friends
- and spending time in nature.

While all of these things are enjoyed by most young people, they are seen by many as pleasant pastimes rather than as essential to finding a sense of peace and happiness.

Girl-friends and boy-friends are important to about 28 per cent of the young people who responded to the survey. Shopping was affirmed as important by a little less than 20 per cent. Only 2 per cent felt that drugs and alcohol were important to seeking peace and happiness.

Girls were a little more into craft, music and nature than were boys. They also affirmed the importance of prayer and church a little more strongly. The suburban Bangkok young people placed a little more importance on friends, girl-friends and boy-friends and shopping than did young people in other parts of the country. They also placed a little less importance on prayer and church attendance than did other young people.

**Who They Talk To**
According to the responses in the questionnaire, the most likely thing that young people would do if
they had a problem or a decision about something that was important, whether it was big or small, would be to pray. Close to half of them said they would certainly pray, and an additional 30 per cent said it was very likely that they would pray. Again, this indicates the importance of faith in their daily lives.

Secondly, about one-third of them would turn to their parents for advice, with another third of them also likely to talk with their parents.

Again, the foci of faith and family are evident among these young people. They are the major sources of assistance when they are facing problems or decisions.

Twenty-seven per cent said they would certainly think by themselves and a similar proportion would probably do so. This is much less than one might have expected.

Many would turn to friends, but not as a first resort. Only 17 per cent said they would definitely seek advice from their friends, although almost half of all the young people said it was likely that they would do so.

There are a range of other options open to them in terms of adults who might assist. The responses to each of these: a religious leader, a teacher, or a close adult friend, were similar. About 10 per cent said they would definitely seek advice from such people. An additional 30 per cent said they might
do so.

Other options such as making merit or going to a fortune teller were affirmed by only a few of these young people.

The Values and Social Involvement of Young People

Another way of looking at how faith relates to life is to look at people's values and their social involvement and activities. Two questions sought to do this. These questions provide an indication of what is important to young people and how they relate to the world in which they live. They also provide an opportunity for measuring whether religious faith has a direct impact on their lives. As a measure of religious faith, in this context, we have taken the practice of church attendance, looking at those who attend weekly and those who attend less frequently.

Values

What young people want most of all is peace and harmony. They want that peace and harmony in the world as a whole. They want it in family life. They want it in their inner lives. And they want it in the communities in which they live. This is the primary focus of life for them.

Are peace and harmony so important to them because they find them so difficult to attain? Are they
anxious about maintaining peace and harmony? Or are they so important to them because they are key values in their culture, instilled into them as over-riding values since they were young?

There are a range of other things that can contribute to happiness and wellbeing in life that are valued. These include: success, religion, freedom, equality and order. The sense of order is indicated by the importance of politeness and national security. They also see it as being important to help others – contributing to the social environment in which they want to live.

The beauty of the environment and having good friends are also important, but are not generally seen as being key values. They contribute to a pleasant environment in which to live and work, but are not critical to the nature of the environment. Wealth, creativity and excitement are individualistic pursuits and at the bottom of the list. Again, they are important, but are not key to a peaceful and harmonious world.

The following table compares the rank order of values of those who were frequent attenders and those who were occasional attenders. The frequent attenders tended to rate most items, apart from excitement and wealth, higher than did the occasional attenders. Perhaps this indicates a tendency to take life a little more seriously as a whole. However, the interest comparisons are in the comparative rank ordering of the various values. It should be noted that many young people found it relatively difficult to distinguish the various values in terms of their importance and thus the level of differentiation between one value and another was often not great.

Table 4: Young People Associated with the CCT Comparing Frequent Attenders with Occasional Attenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank Order of Values</th>
<th>Frequent Attenders</th>
<th>Occasional Attenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family happiness (4.3)</td>
<td>Inner peace (3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>World peace (4.2)</td>
<td>Family (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cooperation (4.2)</td>
<td>Cooperation (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good friends (4.1)</td>
<td>Good friends (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inner peace (4.1)</td>
<td>World peace (3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Equality (4.0)</td>
<td>Politeness (3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Politeness (4.0)</td>
<td>Success (3.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Success (4.0)</td>
<td>Freedom (3.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Religious faith (3.9)</td>
<td>Religious faith (3.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Helping others (3.7)</td>
<td>Equality (3.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>National security (3.6)</td>
<td>Beauty of environment (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Freedom (3.6)</td>
<td>National security (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Creativity (3.5)</td>
<td>Helping others (3.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Beauty of environment (3.4)</td>
<td>Creativity (3.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Excitement (3.2)</td>
<td>Excitement (3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Wealth (2.4)</td>
<td>Wealth (2.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that, overall, the differences between the young people who frequently
attend a church and those who attend occasionally are not great in terms of their rank ordering. However, the following differences only include those cases where a particular value was more than one rank order different from one group to the other. The frequent attenders gave a high rank ordering to the values of world peace, helping others and equality. Each of these values have to do with the social environment and suggest that the frequent attenders are little more concerned about the nature of the social environment than are the occasional attenders.

The occasional attenders gave a higher rank ordering to the values of inner peace, freedom and the beauty of the environment. Each of these have to do with the self and how the self operates and appreciates the world. These differences suggest that the occasional attenders are a little more focussed on the self rather than on the wider social environment in the ways that they operate.

The age group of the respondent made little difference to their values. Nor did their level of education, or whether they had been converted or grown up in a Christian family. Girls were a little more concerned than boys about the maintenance of social harmony in family, community and the wider world.

**Social Actions**

Many young people said that they discussed social issues with their friends. However, less than half of them said they had done so several times in the last 12 months! Many seem to do so only occasionally.
Many young people had found themselves in the position of discouraging others from using drugs. Seventy per cent said they had done this at least once in the last 12 months and 27 per cent said they had done so several times. Indeed, they were more likely to have discouraged others in the use of drugs than to have helped elderly or disabled people.

Sometime in the last 12 months, around half of the young people had
• provided some support to children who were victims of domestic violence or other social situations;
• given money to help people affected by the tsunami, or
• given money to help with environmental issues.
Many had also sought to empower others to help themselves in one way or another. Very few had given blood.

In general, the older young people were more likely to have helped others such as elderly or disabled, or children who were victims of social circumstances. They were more likely to have discouraged people from using drugs and more likely to have volunteered to help in the community. Those who attended church weekly were also more likely to have helped in these sorts of ways although the differences were not great. For example, 72 per cent of those who attended weekly said they had helped an elderly or disabled person once or twice or more often in the last 12 months, compared with 64 per cent of those who attended occasionally.

Younger people, particularly those still at school, were more likely to have given money to help with the tsunami or with the environment. Older males were more likely to have given blood.

**Implications**

*Evangelism*

1. Plan evangelism in a wholistic way. It is evident from these responses that a range of factors must be in place for evangelism to occur successfully. Simply having evangelistic campaigns is not enough. There must be accepting communities of worship into which young people can be incorporated. There must also be opportunities to help young people to read the Bible and to understand it.

2. Evangelism should be part of the activity of youth groups. There are significant portions of young people who attend, at least from time to time, who have not made up their minds about their commitment to faith. Youth groups can provide an opportunity for young people to think through decisions of faith.

3. Work with whole families where possible. These results suggest that it is important to work with whole families, where possible. Young people remain closely tied to their families and have a great loyalty to them. If whole families are converted, they will support each other.

4. Help young people to interpret the experience of God in their lives. The beliefs of Christians provide little barrier to most young people in Thailand. The idea of a God who acts in the world is not an intellectual problem here as it is in some Western societies. Nevertheless, it is the personal experience of God that has the greatest impact. As people pray and find that God actually answers their prayers, so they become convinced of the reality and the love of the God Christians proclaim.

5. Evangelism among suburban young people may need to take greater account of the individual needs of those young people. There are some hints in the data that new generations of young people
may be arising who think somewhat differently. They are a little more individualistically oriented. They place more value on friends and less on family, more value on creativity and less on tradition. These sorts of changes are most evident among young people in the suburbs of Bangkok at the present time. To reach out to these young people may mean some different methods of evangelism involving a greater emphasis on creativity and on connecting with their individual needs.

6. Friendship evangelism, which has been popular in the West, does not seem to have a great deal of impact in Thailand. No doubt, people can and should invite friends to evangelistic activities. However, in the effectiveness of evangelism, other factors appear to be much more important.

**Church Life**

1. Emphasise the relationship to God in worship. Many young people join in worship wholeheartedly. They say that they feel close to God in worship. They find the singing up-lifting. They say they are growing in faith through their local churches and they finding guidance in them. What is most important to them is the relationship to God that they experience through worship.

2. Work on the problems within the churches. One of the greatest discouragements among young people to involvement in the churches is the conflict and hypocrisy they have seen there. Some young people would rather not come to church at all rather than get involved in such problems.

3. Ensure that young people are always welcomed and accepted in the churches. Some feel that they are not always well accepted or welcomed when they do come. They are not always encouraged to use their gifts and skills. For the sake of young people, it is important that churches go out of their way to make them welcome and help them to feel accepted. They are an important part of the present community and the essence of the community of the church in the future.

4. Encourage flexibility in the opportunities for worship. Many young people find problems in attending services because they have conflicting responsibilities with study and work. It may be that churches can a little more flexible in the ways they offer opportunities for worship so that, if one time does not suit, another time may be more appropriate. In some other countries, a significant proportion of worship services occur not on Sundays but on other days of the week, catering for the many people who now have to work on Sunday.

**Christian Education**

A specific question was asked about what young people would like in Christian education.

1. Prayer was affirmed most strongly of all topics. There was very little differentiation in what young people wanted in terms of Christian education. One item stood out: prayer. They would like more teaching on prayer. Secondarily, they would like to understand the Bible better and what God is like. These topics relate to the centre of faith for young people: their personal relationship with God. This teaching needs to help them to recognise God in their lives but also help them deal with those times when God seems to be far away and does not answer prayers.

2. Teaching about relationships with others is important. However, Christian teaching about relationships, both within the family and among friends were affirmed widely as being helpful. Further, most young people would like to know a little more about how to share their faith with others.

3. Teaching about living in society is important. Young people put the importance of teaching about living in society down the bottom of the list. On the other hand, it is evident that many young
people are not clear on the implications of faith for living in society, the way that one relates to others, the importance of living a life that is oriented towards others. It is easy for the emphasis on the personal relationship with God to slide into a personal faith that has little bearing on the ways that young people relate to the society in which they live. Emphasising the social implications of faith will counter-balance the emphasis on the personal nature of faith.

Faith is making a difference to the lives of young people. In particular, they are finding comfort and strength in their belief in a God who is real and who changes things. They appreciate the forgiveness and love of God which gives them a sense of security. In a world which sometimes seems chaotic and threatening, God is very real to them. They connect with God through personal prayer, and sometimes through reading the Bible, and through public worship.

However, there are times when God seems far away, when their prayers go unanswered. Particularly those who do not have Christian families may find it hard to cope with those times. Some young people are confused by life and are not sure how they should live. There are many and various influences around them, and the traditional patterns of life, particularly among the younger members of the youth groups, are not always found to be satisfactory.

Providing support in an environment that is rapidly changing, and challenging young people to live as Christians, will be important on-going activities.