

95 Thesis „Youth and Church“

stated by 100 youth of the Weigle-Haus/Essen and distributed among the congregation on the Reformation Day 2005

They all agreed upon that Reformation means change and without youth the churches look like very old! Churches need modernization.

1. We as youth feel being a part of church! Therefore we desire more participation and more chances for designing.
2. As youth we request that our desires, imaginations and needs are taken seriously.
3. With all other Christians we would like to shape our Church.
4. That means, that we do not want to split up as an exclusive Youth Church but be as youth a big and essential part of the future of the Church.
5. Therefore we ask you, to read these thesis. We wish a creative dialogue based on partnership. It is our target to built up God's kingdom together with you.

6. The normal services are strange to the culture of youth.
7. Our multicultural society is divided in different social groups, scenes and milieus. Every group has its own rituals, culture, language and codes of behaviour.
8. In many fields the church has missed this development.
9. While we listen to "Einslive" (= radio programme for youth) in the Church they play still "WDR 3" (= radio programme for elder people)
10. The language of the Church in songs and liturgy is strange for us.
11. The proclamation of the gospel has to be done in everyday language.
12. E-guitar and drums are as holy as organ and trombone.
13. Even the so called "Modern Music" in the Church is 30 year behind nowadays reality.
14. There should be as many Pop concerts in the Church as organ concerts.
15. The lingual pictures in church songs are not understandable any more.
16. Services must not be a monotonous One Man Show.
17. Services should be also interactive.
18. Where the new media makes sense, it should be used.
19. Where the new media exclude people it has to be criticized.
20. We need true-to-life and comprehensible sermons.
21. The classic frontal sermon is not the only legitimate method of preaching.
22. The rigid fittings of most church buildings has on us, the Youth, a deterrent effect.
23. The sacred symbolism of church's interieurs keeps closed up to us.
24. With the word "Church" we connect: old-fashioned, irrelevant and far away from life.
25. But if the Church is old-fashioned, irrelevant and far away from life, she does not fulfil her explicit mission, namely to be salt, light and a town on the hill.
26. Young (also not ordained) people should proclaim and preach. The talent for ministry is more important than an academic degree.
27. The priesthood of all believers is also valid for us. What does this mean for the administration of the sacraments?
28. We as youth need to be free upon the decision how we are worshipping.
29. We ourselves know best what kind of youth work is good for us. Therefore we actively have to decide upon the methods of youth work.
30. We have to be involved in financial decisions, e.g. church tax funds for church music or youth work?
31. Cutting the funds for youth work in difficult times means to cut the future of the church.

32. Who gives up diaconal youth work, neglects an important part of the biblical mission.
33. Who only is dealing with money has only earned money.
34. The Body of Christ is more important than a balanced budget.
35. Jesus Christ and not the church tax are the basis of the Church. Faith can't be bought.
36. Since the Church has constructed cultural barriers we as young Christians cannot pass the joy of the gospel to our friends.
37. Church often does not see these barriers. For us as youth they are more real.
38. "Normal youth" has almost no chance to find Jesus Christ. Although, lots of them are fascinated by the person of Jesus but put off by the institution of the Church.
39. Each generation has to invent the suitable form of the Church anew (inculturation of the Gospel).
40. Confirmation classes are more or less the attempt to force the youth in the strange culture of the Church. On the opposite, it is important to facilitate experiences with the gospel in the culture of the youth.
41. Pastoral care is not limited to elder and ill persons.
42. We need people who take the youth serious and listen to them. Why then the cut-down of social workers and deacons in the church?
43. We have to be involved in all decisions concerning us.
44. Primarily, God's love is important; not obligations, rules and moral ideas. These result from God's love but their obeying can't be a pre-condition for the access to God's love.
45. Churches have to open up space for youth.
46. We want a Church offering a real home, that means a place where community can be experienced.
47. Church should be a spiritual home for us.
48. We want a lively spirituality.
49. Church has to be a healing and consoling community.
50. Church works like the pattern: "Behave, believe, belong." First one has to adopt, than you may believe, then someday you belong to it. It has to be the other way round: Being accepted, believing, than changing one's behaviour ("Belong, believe, behave")
51. We want Church as a network of relations, not an institution.
52. The parochial system is outdated. Personal relationships are more important than geographical proximity.
53. Church has a problem of credibility. It shall not longer preach wine and spread water. Who says "The youth is our future" shall not let the youth alone on the streets.
54. Church has to offer alternatives to a self-centred life.
55. Church has to give ethical orientation. It shall not send away or condemn.
56. Church has to give answers to current questions and communicate these in a way of respect and clarity.
57. Sunday morning is for a lot amongst youth an almost impossible time for visiting the service.
58. Service is not only an event but also a lifestyle.
59. Pastors have to be in the midst of life, not beside.
60. Confirmation classes shall not be given by pastors not able to deal with youth.
61. Christian socialisation is not something normal amongst youth any longer. Therefore we have to make our rituals transparent what usually does not take place in confirmation classes.
62. We want more ecumenism. Our common basis is Jesus Christ. Confessional differences do not play an important role.

63. Confessional differences are no reason for separation but for a creative dialogue.
64. Jesus is radical. The problem of all of us is that we are not.
65. When love for the fellow human being is implemented consequently it is also provoking.
66. The values of Jesus have to be true for the Church, even when the spirit of the times is opposite to them.
67. We want flat hierarchies to address the real problems instead of discussing hollow problems with the leaders of the Church.
68. Being able to react towards social challenges the Church has to be more flexible without losing its confessions.
69. We shall no longer whine about that the people don't come to us but shall finally and consequently go there where the people are.
70. Church shall not be ashamed of its message. There is a great hunger for religious orientation. The problem is that the church preaching the gospel does not go to the limit.
71. The resurrection of Christ and the biblical miracles are not to be denied.
72. Church has to get multicultural.
73. Church in Germany has to open up for people from other countries and cultures.
74. We have a right of being individuals although we have to work as a whole. This is not possible without the Holy Spirit.
75. In all areas Church has to speak out for those being at a disadvantage.
76. The criteria of all political acting of the Church have to be the weak.
77. Opposite to the economic globalisation the Church has to work on a spiritual globalisation. This comprises advocating for the victims of unjust economic structures.
78. Preaching without diaconia is dead; social work without the Gospel is hollow.
79. Church shall not be conducted as a company.
80. Prayer shall not be only a form of ceremony and liturgy.
81. Who does not pray shall not be surprised that nothing happens.
82. Various forms of prayer have their right and have to be filled with life.
83. A quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Who does not speak out for the Jews shall not sing Gregorian chant". For us this means: Who does not care for the weakest in society, shall not care for Church music.
84. We need more activities with an easy access.
85. Church has to invest in the future, not anxiously defending traditionally loved things.
86. Innovative ventures have to be supported.
87. Mission is the motor for growth of the Church.
88. Investing in mission is necessary to design a meaningful future of the Church.
89. The current structure of the Church hinders the foundation of new congregations and therefore the growth of the Church.
90. Youth is said to be materialistic, superficial, fun-oriented,... The truth is we are longing for spirituality and search for answers to the vital questions of life.
91. Church has a problem of communicating with us. Answers, as far as they are given, don't reach us.
92. The church has to step into a real dialogue with us which has to be continuous and offering results.
93. Youth has to be involved when it comes to priority setting in the Church.
94. Synods and parish councils have to speak with the youth, not about or with people who allegedly speak out for the youth.
95. When the Church does not want to lose its meaning in the 21 century it needs a new reformation.