

THE STUDENT LIFE

Over the past year it was so nice to get back into a rhythm and rebuild after the year-and-a-bit of COVID. Starting in January of 2022 we were able to begin to meet again consistently and re-establish who we are and what we do at TSL. In the last year we have established some of our values and what we are about.

FAITH IS ATTRACTIVE

TSL is focused on breaking down barriers and false expectations as to what faith is all about. When students truly come into an understanding of the gospel, there is a pull and desire to want to be a part of a relationship with Jesus. So, over the last year, we've set out to create spaces where students can get real in their faith, but it's also a fun and exciting place to be! In saying that, over the last year we saw an increase in new people attending TSL, averaging about two new students every week and have consistently had 45 students at youth every week. For six months, we started a once-a-month night where students would hear from other students who prepared a message and spoke in front of their peers.

LIFE-CHANGE

Coming into a relationship with Jesus should incite life-change in a few ways, so we had plenty of opportunities for students to encounter the life changing power of Jesus. We did this by having weekly worship, memorizing John 15, and going to events where students could spend the weekend worshipping. We took 60 kids to events like Overflow and our Fall Retreat and the powerful testimonies that came out of these weekends away was so incredible.

We took a smaller group to a summer camp called Activate where 20 students got to dive deeper into their faith, and some of the students on that trip felt the call to ministry, and many others felt more purpose and to live authentically for Jesus.

PIONEERING

We are wanting to be led by the Holy Spirit and that means that we cannot simply draw our inspiration from the things done previously but being sensitive to the direction from the Lord. 2022 was a year of changes and innovations for TSL. We graduated a large number of our students in the spring and as a result we needed to rebuild and restructure some of our student teams. One of those was establishing our worship team, bringing in new leaders to help with specific areas like worship. We also had our first Barrie-wide rally where we are focused on breaking down denominational barriers and gathering as the Church so that students across Barrie from different churches may be encouraged in seeing their peers who also are Christians.

FAMILY

Community is a powerful tool in connecting young people to faith and the church. TSL is a family, and we are focused on establishing true community at youth. One of the ways we accomplished this over the last year was creating a lot of space during our youth nights to make sure students could mingle with leaders and each other.

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During the summer we had many social gatherings where we would get together every week with anywhere from five to ten students to hang out and create fun memories together. A more unique way of creating strong relational bonds was through one of the camping trips where I take seven students out into the bush and we either hike or portage for 3 days, getting to know each other in a different way, but also leaning on one another to help achieve tasks, whether that's hiking a long distance or paddling in a canoe. Those who have participated in these trips have developed some of the strongest relationships within TSL.

KNOWN LOVE OF GOD & OTHERS

The final value we hold is being known for our love of God and love of others. I started visiting schools in the fall of 2021 for dropping off donuts to students and their friends, and I continued to do that in 2022. This has allowed me to interact with a lot of students who don't know Jesus, and don't know why I am giving away donuts. To see their face when I say, "to bless them" it is very rewarding. This has also given me a reputation at certain schools, where I have become known as "the donut guy." Outside of donuts we have done several service nights to bless the community in our area. We took up an offering and raised over 300 dollars for missions in the month of October. We packed over 100 backpacks for the Busby Center, and we spent a youth night out in downtown Barrie handing out hot drinks and snacks to those in need.

It's been a wild year, one that I'm so beyond blessed to have had the opportunity to lead and steward! I look forward to where we are going as a youth ministry and seeing the hunger and burning desire in the hearts of the students to have real relationships with God is something that gets me out of bed every day. 2023 is already filled with incredible stories of life-change and power! I couldn't have done any of this without the help of my incredible leadership team. They've helped me grow and better myself and I'm honored to lead such a selfless and passionate team! So, thank you, to all who have spend time in prayer for TSL, and thank you to those who have invested their time into helping TSL be a place where students can grow and learn to be more like Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,
Will Ferguson