This study is born out of anecdotal concern for religious attrition among 1.5- and second-generation Asian-Canadian Christian young adults. Leaders of congregations have expressed concern over the number of young adults who, although highly committed to the church throughout their secondary school years, nonetheless have tended to leave the church once they graduated from high school.

The challenge of spiritual attrition among Asian-Canadian Protestant young people is particularly important when set against the challenges that some congregations are experiencing in the areas of church growth. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Canada experienced significant immigration from Asian countries such as Taiwan and South Korea. During this period, many congregations underwent significant numerical growth. As authoritarian regimes in those countries have developed into functioning democracies, the tide of immigration has slowed or reversed with corresponding effects on growth among congregations in Canada. This recent context of slowing growth or numerical stagnation has heightened the concern that Asian-Canadian church leaders have felt over the issue of spiritual attrition among young adults. As you will see in selected bibliographies, a research has been hardly in Canadian context.

This study examines religious loyalty among 1.5 and second generation Asian-Canadian Protestant young adults with the aim of determining how and why religious commitment and attitudes might change when such young people leave high school. I with the research team surveyed 300 University students – 150 of Korean, 115 of Chinese, and 35 of Taiwanese descent – ages 18 to 25, who identify as Protestant to better understand their religious attitudes and commitment to their churches. The survey asked 78 questions – both multiple choice and descriptive – to gather demographic information and also find out more about these students’ church experiences while they were in high school, their current church and spiritual life, their parents’ church life, as well as gauge their ideas and expectations about the church and youth ministry.

While I am still in the midst of analyzing the data, my findings so far have been eye opening. Of the 300 students, 216 participants currently attend church. In their written responses, the students used the words: “being connected;” “diversity;” “openness;” and “inclusiveness,” to describe what they wanted in
their church lives. Repeatedly, respondents said they wanted to be part of a church that made them feel connected to real life events, to family, to church leaders, to congregations, and to spirituality in a changing world. Not wanting to be treated like children, the students expressed a desire for churches to address the difficult issues in the world in their teachings.

Our preliminary findings show the positive effects of youth ministry in the church. The respondents views concerning the future of the church are hopeful and worth listening to. Indeed, there is hope that those students who do not currently attend church might return.

According to the findings I will propose implications to the church for youth ministry, such as how and what to teach to youth, images of leaders for youth, strength of relationship, etc

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