

calling youth to discipleship

A Guide for Youth and Confirmation Leaders

Note to Call to Discipleship planning leaders: Reproduce and distribute this planning resource to your youth Sunday school teacher/s, pastor, youth worker, catechist/s, mentors or youth music director as a tool to assist them in planning for and interpreting the Call to Discipleship with your young people. You may also want to consider hosting a youth leaders' training session or a retreat, utilizing this resource as your inspiration for teaching.

Who's Calling?

"God doesn't ask us to be perfect...just faithful." That thought is reassuring to all of us, but especially to youth. The Call to Discipleship is not a destination, but a journey: a lifelong journey that is marked with stretching, falling, listening, growing, questioning, learning, doing, seeking, sensing and moving toward a deepened relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Frank Mercadante, in his book, *Growing Teen Disciples*¹ puts it this way, "Like the kingdom of God, the disciple's journey resides within the constant tension between the here and now and the not yet." Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, gives us strength for this journey with these encouraging words:

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

————— *Philippians 3:12*

Today, young people have more choices than ever before. The impact of media, technology and violence is changing the way they think and act. They live in a fast-food, instant-gratification, fragmented place where the changing landscape of the family and the community redefines the cultural trends of their generation. It is within this disconnected, high-energy, in-flux world that God is working to transform and shape the lives of young people. Youth are not indifferent to matters of faith. They want to make sense of God. They want to know about heaven and hell and the man called Jesus. They want to know how the Bible relates to their lives. Above all, they crave genuine relationships — the kind of relationships that can be found in caring Christian community.

Our job as youth "tend-ers"

We have a precious gift in each young person entrusted to our care. With that endowment comes an awesome responsibility! In reality, our time with each young person is relatively short. Yet the goal is to help that young person become a lifelong follower of Christ. Our hope is that the young people we work with will experience the inexpressible assurance of God's presence, grace and unconditional love, and that they will grow in the way God has planned for them. We love and care for their wellbeing so much that we want to make sure they are equipped to walk daily with Jesus as they make positive, healthy decisions in their relationships at school, at home, with friends, in sports or at their weekend jobsite.

That's our job as leaders who work with and nurture youth. There are two pieces to which we need to pay attention as we go about this good work.

First, tending youth often requires us to straddle two worlds. Sometimes we are so eager to be their friends and to be liked by them that we become overly sensitive to not "turning them off." Unfortunately, sometimes that means we never quite "turn them on." While we need to be aware of activities in which they're involved, the music they like, the TV they're watching, the magazines they buy, the hot new Web sites they're hitting and the language they use....we owe it to our young people to boldly teach them the language of faith, the life-giving power of God.

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The second is to remember that age is not necessarily an indicator of faith maturity. Many adults have been humbled by a child or young person whose insight showed amazing spiritual depth and clarity. The most important gift we can give young people is ourselves, authentic and open about our own faith journey:

And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that our faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

————— *1 Corinthians 2:3-5*

Faith practices for and with youth
The ELCA Call to Discipleship is an opportunity for congregations to encourage and challenge every child, youth and adult to learn the language of faith and to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ by living out seven faith practices: pray, study, worship, invite, encourage, serve and give. As you begin to highlight these practices in your teaching and conversation, you may find that the notion of “practices” takes some time for youth to warm up to. There could be confusion with a “practice makes perfect” mindset. On the other hand, you will also discover that youth today are searching for clear, helpful spiritual guidance. They want to know in simple language what God seeks from us in terms of lifestyle and behavior. Whatever language you choose to use when discussing faith practices, remember that this is more about *being a person of God* than it is about *doing the work of God*, and that the journey is lifelong.

Using this section of the Guide
The purpose of this planning resource is to assist you as a youth Sunday school teacher, pastor, youth worker, catechist, mentor or youth music director to interpret and plan for ways to nurture in young people a faith that expresses itself in a strong commitment to Jesus Christ. The following pages offer you a description of each of the seven faith practices and how they relate to your work with youth. Each faith practice is followed by suggestions and ideas to help you nurture the seeds of faith in your own life, with others and in specific contexts. The highlighted areas include:



You, as youth nurturer



Confirmation



Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities



Youth group activities



Home and family



Congregational connections

This is only a starting list. You will undoubtedly find other ways to help your young people and their families engage in these lifelong faith practices.

Utilize the grid at the end of this tool to build a plan that is best for your context and setting. Consider ways you can involve young people in your planning from the start. Inviting youth to be part of a brainstorming, planning session around the seven faith practices becomes a rich learning moment for teaching about discipleship.

If you are not already a part of your congregation's Call to Discipleship planning team, take time to have conversations with members of the team. This will help ensure that your work with youth is fully integrated with the other congregational activities surrounding the Call. It also increases the likelihood that some of your activities will be intergenerational in scope and character.

faith practices f o r y o u t h

P R A Y



In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you are also built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.
— *Ephesians 2:21*

Jesus prayed often. He taught his disciples to pray. This encounter with God is grounded in Baptism as we are named and claimed and called into community with others. It involves listening to our hearts, to others and to God's purpose for us. "The practice of prayer with youth, therefore, involves careful listening to their needs in relation to the vast scope of the world's need, together with genuine discernment about how this need relates both to the mystery of God's purpose and God's faithfulness to us" (*Up the Creek with a Paddle*, p.33).² Leading youth to a genuine life of prayer is not an option, it is a mandate.

You, as youth nurturer

Keep pictures of your youth or a list of their names over the kitchen sink, at your computer or near the space where you hold your daily devotions. Pray daily for two or three of them by name, giving thanks and offering to God's care the unique and special issues in their lives. Pray for their families and ask God to help you be a channel for God's grace and love in their lives. Let the youth know you hold them in your prayers.

Confirmation

Give young people the opportunity to care for each other through prayer. Begin sessions with a catch-up time, asking each person how their week went and the current "hot topics" for prayer. At first, you may want to model a simple, straightforward, conversational prayer. As the comfort level rises, invite youth to offer prayers on behalf of each other. Small prayer teams of two, three or four may be a viable alternative if you sense large-group anxieties gripping your young people.

Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities


Introduce different styles of prayer with your lessons. Be attentive to the variety of preferred methods of learning and communicating. Not all of us are great orators, but God has insured that all of us are pray-ers. *Prayer Power*, available on-line at www.elca.org/etteam, offers nearly a hundred different simple prayer ideas to use with children and youth.

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P R A Y
continued

 **Youth group activities**

Surround times of conflict, anger, misbehavior, discouragement, joy, celebration or spiritual drought with prayer. Any time is a right time to pray. Help your youth see God's hold on them in all aspects of life. By turning to prayer first, we teach our young people about the Holy Spirit's prompting in calling us to a relationship with God.

 **Home and family**

Provide devotional materials for use at home. Consider a quick starter course in prayer for parents who may not know how to pray with their children. Help them learn by example. Use occasional opportunities as teachable moments to gather parents together for prayer (e.g., invite parents into the sanctuary to pray for their safety as the youth group is pulling out of the parking lot for the annual ski trip).

 **Congregational connections**

Mobilize congregation members who can't sleep on the floor at lock-ins or who are not inclined to teach youth Sunday school to support the youth of the congregation through prayer. Match each young person with an adult prayer partner. You might even consider asking a Sunday school child to pray daily for a confirmation student. Building such a sense of connectedness among members of the congregation speaks volumes of meaning in a young person's life.

Suggested resources for P R A Y

Closer to God: Youth Experiencing Prayer, Brian Hardesty, Abingdon Press. Leader's Guide ISBN: 0-687-07591-2, Prayer Journal ISBN: 0-687-07601-3. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

Pathways to Praying with Teens, Maryann Hakowski, St. Mary's Press. ISBN: 0-88489-296-4. 800/533-8095 or www.smp.org.

Prayer Power, Diane Monroe

ELCA Prayer Web Site, www.elca.org/prayer



S T U D Y



As you therefore have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7

Jesus was a master teacher. Long before it was fashionable, Jesus was attentive to learning styles, small group ministry, and the transforming power of story. He knew Scripture and offered scriptural texts as easy to understand instructions for living. His parables modeled an interactive question and answer format and brought scriptural truth to life through the use of common stories and objects. This is how Jesus helped people come to know the sacred Scripture as a guide for God's will in their lives. Bible study is crucial for young people today. As the world changes and youth face countless choices, their quest for answers becomes more critical. We fall short of our role as faith nurturers if we focus only on the here and now. Someone once said, "if you give a hungry person a fish, they eat for a day. If you give them a net and teach them to fish, they eat for a lifetime." We feed our youth for a lifetime if we help them establish the practice of Bible study.

You, as youth nurturer

Live God's word by studying it and modeling it daily. Expect the language you use, the jokes and stories you allow to be told, the way you work through conflict and the way you relate to each young person to be Christlike and pleasing to God.

Confirmation

React to teachable moments with spontaneity and flexibility. Use those opportunities to approach the study of Scripture with youth from a discovery perspective. Provide a subscription to *Devazine: Just For Teens* devotional guide (call 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org) for each of your confirmation students to encourage daily Bible reading and reflection on God's presence in daily life.

Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities

Make scripture come alive with multi-media, interactive learning, technology and varied teaching styles. Let your Internet junkies surf the Web for the best on-line Bible studies. Invite youth to lead your study and above all, value their emotional investment in their story as part of God's story.

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STUDY
continued



Youth group activities

Bring young people together over Scripture in a variety of creative and fun ways. You might consider:

- A “Bad-Boys-of the-Bible” retreat
- Small cell groups that bring together 6-8 young people for prayer, praise, study and support.
- A weekly eye-opener morning Bible study before school.
- A solid in-depth systematic way to explore issues of faith for those youth eager to go deeper.



Home and family

Build on your congregation’s established pattern of gifting young people with Bibles by hosting special family events with games, activities and family-centered ideas for home devotions. Consider a “Junior High Family Bible Blast” or a “Senior High Family Scripture Scream.”



Congregational connections

Select one or two youth to be “Scripture Scouts.” Scouts call congregation members to “sniff out” their favorite Bible passages. With permission, print the passage in your Sunday bulletin or newsletter with a brief explanation (e.g. Our Scripture Scout passage this week is brought to you by eight-year-old Andrew Smith, who tells us this was the Bible passage his grandmother wrote on his birthday card. *O give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his steadfast loves endures forever.* Psalm 118:1).

Suggested resources for STUDY

Witness Youth Bible Studies, See Augsburg Fortress catalog for a complete listing of titles or call 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

Core Belief series for Junior High and Senior High, Group Publishing. 800/447-1070 or www.grouppublishing.com.

Growing Disciples: Discipleship in the New Testament, John Bradowsky. Found in Section B of the Living Faith Congregational Planning Guide.

Faith Lens, a weekly Web page Bible study from ELCA Youth Ministries. Includes feature news articles, discussion questions, Scripture references, a Gospel reflection and closing activity suggestions. www.elca.org/dcm/youth/resources/index.html

W O R S H I P

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

— *Psalm 100:1-2*



Jesus went to the temple and synagogues often. A defining mark of Christian community is the way it gathers for corporate worship to experience God's power and presence. Worship is a time when people bring their talents, gifts, struggles and joys, and offer them collectively to God. God is the center of all we do in worship. In the Lutheran church, we have a rich tradition of meaningful worship: our music, the ritual of our liturgy, the way in which we celebrate God's presence in the Eucharist and at baptism, the proclamation of the Word, and the rhythm of God's people who gather, hear, celebrate and send. Yet for many young people, there is a disconnect. They often find worship meaningless and boring. The Bible doesn't tell us that there is just one way to worship, though John's Gospel reminds us: "those who worship must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). As the "whole" family of God gathers in worship, there are ways to help young people feel like they belong:

- Create a positive environment where everyone is welcome and greeted with integrity.
- Engage youth as active participants, giving them reason to break out of the on-looker role.
- Invite youth to share their gifts of worship planning, leadership, music, dance, speaking, hospitality, and creative artistry.
- Strive for an understandable and relevant message.
- Enhance the multi-sensory nature of worship that has long been a part of our Lutheran heritage.

You, as youth nurturer

Feed yourself first. Take time to renew yourself by being in God's presence through regular worship. You send a loud, clear message about the value of worship when your young people see you actively worshipping in your congregation.



Confirmation

Find ways, as you and your confirmation class work through elements of Luther's Catechism, to share their contemporary interpretation with the rest of the congregation by occasionally:

- Using a contemporary paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed written by the youth.
- Inviting youth to do a skit in place of the children's sermon.
- Asking youth to lead the prayers of the church with prayers they've written in confirmation class.
- Asking the confirmation class to join baptismal families at the font to witness baptism.

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W O R S H I P



Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities

continued

Introduce your class to contemporary Christian music. Many young people don't even know that there are alternatives to the pop culture music found on their favorite radio stations. Have a CD or tape playing as youth arrive for class. Your local Christian book store may be willing to lend you demo tapes or CDs as you help your class explore the wide variety of styles ranging from Gregorian chant to Christian ska and metal.



Youth group activities

Explore a variety of forms of spiritual expression during your youth group time. Invite a guest to demonstrate Christian meditation or spirituality through art. As you and the youth plan devotions, use the gifts you have in your midst (e.g., invite your high school dancers to express a Bible passage or Christian song through movement). Many youth have transforming worship experiences while they are at camp, on retreats, or while visiting other congregations. Ask them to lead devotions by sharing these different and creative worship styles.



Home and family

Invite families to leadership roles in worship (e.g., families presenting the Communion elements, ushering or offering the prayers of the church). Times like Advent and Lent are ideal for encouraging church-home activities. During Advent worship, ask families to light the Advent wreath and tell about an Advent tradition in their home.



Congregational connections

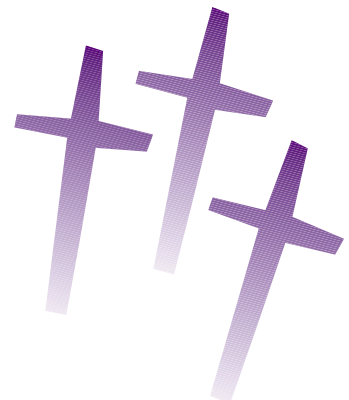
Encourage worship leaders to explore the possibility of a contemporary worship service or a service designed especially for youth and young people. Ensure that your planning team is well balanced.

***Suggested resources for* WORSHIP**

Worship Ideas for Youth Ministry, Group Publishing. ISBN: 0-7644-2002-X. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

Awesome Youth Sundays, Martha Johnson, Presbyterian Curriculum Publishing. #095510. 800/524-2612, or www.horeb.pcusa.org/cppa.

Milestones Worship Celebrations, Lee Hovel, Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College. Call 877/239-2492 or www.augsburg.edu/yfi.



INVITE

We have found Him...come and see.

John 1:45-46



Jesus invited! This is no surprise. It is *who* Jesus invited that gives such power to this faith practice. He invited the most unlikely candidates: Zacchaues, the woman at the well, tax collectors, scoundrels, and even the two thieves on either side of him at Calvary. Sometimes Lutherans act as if they don't know the Good News. Someone has said: "It would be wonderful if the church could catch a contagious faith to which there is no antidote." Youth are natural inviters. They don't hesitate to tell a friend about a great movie, which compact disk to buy, or where to find bargain nail polish. They invite their friends to come along to the mall or on family weekend activities. If the church is to nurture these natural tendencies and support our most effective evangelists, three things must be in place. Youth need to see:

- Their congregation putting an emphasis on bringing the Gospel to people outside the church,
- That we make it a priority to strengthen their ability to talk about Jesus with others, and
- That the church to which they invite their friends and their friends' families is a warm, welcoming, Spirit-filled place.



You, as youth nurturer

Model unconditional love with young visitors, no matter what the color of hair, choice of music or current attitude. When we ask our young people to invite their friends and neighbors, we never know who will walk through the door of the church. It is simply our job to embrace and welcome.



Confirmation

Help young people learn to talk about their faith with others by taking "baby steps" each week. Begin by asking the group to share the most important thing God has done in their lives with each other. Starting small and in a safe and familiar environment, will help build confidence in your growing evangelists. At another time, talk about the roadblocks to faith sharing.

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I N V I T E
continued



Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities

Take a long, thoughtful look at your learning setting:

- Does it welcome, invite and say, “We know Jesus’ love and we want to share that love with you.”?
- Are there contemporary pictures and posters on the wall that show God is a lover of teenagers?
- Are youth invited to respond to that love by putting up their own poetry, art or other creative works?
- Have you done your best to create an environment where problem solving or conflict are handled with love and grace?

Plan every session with visitors in mind. A guest will know immediately if your class is a safe and respectful place. When possible, use self-contained lessons. It is hard for a guest to be a part of the conversation if it is dependent on what has happened in previous lessons. Keep an empty chair or space on the sofa as a reminder that friends are welcome.



Youth group activities

Invite others in the congregation to share their faith stories with youth. Create a climate of trust and affirmation for youth to share their faith stories with one another. Remind them that faith sharing is not about perfection or mountaintop experiences. The times we stumble, doubt, mess up and get mad at God are also a part of our faith journey. Be willing to also share your story. Consider an “invite-a-friend retreat” during which your youth might share their faith with their unchurched friends as part of an energy-packed, fun weekend away. Distribute “Living Faith bracelets” to encourage ongoing faith conversation and commitment (see the Call to Discipleship promotional materials in the *Congregational Planning Guide*).



Home and family

Provide faith sharing tools to be used at home. There are dozens of creative ways you can help initiate dinner-table faith conversations:

- Send home a stack of 3x5 talk-starter cards (include questions such as, “Name a time when you were scared. How was God there to help you?”).
- Create an e-mail list serve to deliver a daily dose of faith conversation starters.
- Invite families to come up with conversation starters they can share with others. Publish these in the worship bulletin or church newsletter.
- Offer suggestions and resources that help families engage faith activities at home (e.g., making Advent wreaths, homemade pretzels for Lent, etc.).

INVITE

continued

Congregational connections

Help to plan a Friendship Sunday. Consider utilizing the *A Child Shall Lead Them* friendship celebration materials for a special fall welcome. Remember to include children, youth and adults in the planning and implementation of the worship service and other activities. Tidy up the church as if you were inviting friends to your home. Keep the message simple but bold. Don't overlook details like signage, childcare, greeters, accessibility or publicity! Provide simple tools to assist members in inviting friends and neighbors.

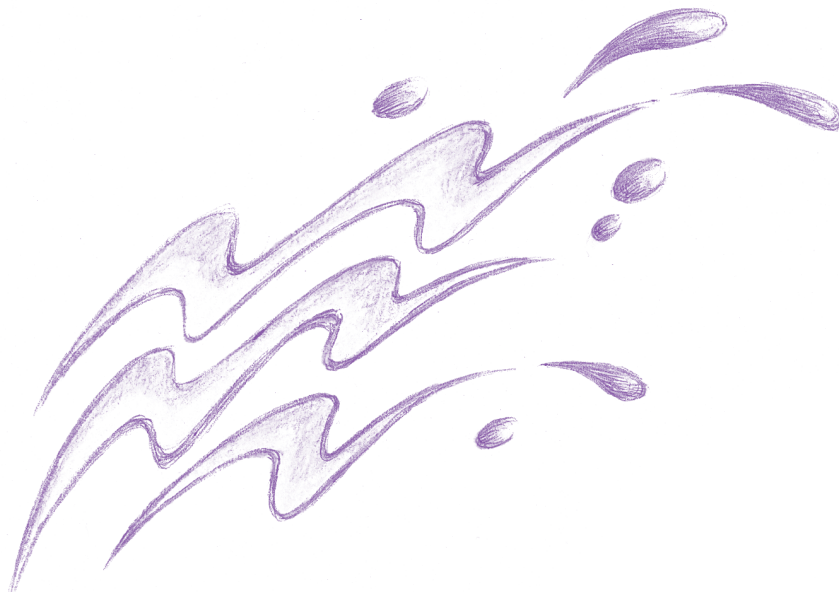
Suggested resources for INVITE

A Child Shall Lead Them; A Guide for Planning a Rally Day Friendship Welcome, Paul Lutz, ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries. ISBN: 6-0001-0855-9; Audiocassette, ISBN: 0-687-07601-3. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648.

Purpose Driven Youth Ministry, Doug Fields, Zondervan Publishing. ISBN: 0-310-21253-7. 800/727-3480 or www.zondervanchurchsource.com.

The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry, Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, Upper Room Books. ISBN: 0-8358-085-0. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

Live the Life: Student Evangelism Training Kit, Youth Specialties. ISBN: 0-310-22576-0. 800/776-8008 or www.zondervan.com.



ENCOURAGE *Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.*
1 Thessalonians 5:11



Jesus walked alongside his disciples. He showed them the way, and by his attitude and actions, taught them how to live faithfully in the world. Jesus expects God's children to be with and for one another. This faith practice requires no special equipment, though some are specially endowed with the spiritual gift of encouragement. We are all called to motivate, console, challenge and inspire each other to live according to God's will. Encouragement is the fuel that equips us to press on. This emotional and spiritual "hand-holding" gives inspiration and comfort as we face the hurdles and challenges of daily life. The late Rich Mullins, a talented Christian musician, often encouraged his friends and fans to "be God's." He wasn't talking about perfection. He was reminding us that the most powerful message we can give each other is to live a life totally immersed in the assurance of God's amazing love, forgiveness, generosity and grace.

You, as youth nurturer

Take care of yourself! Let's face it — working with youth is draining. Beyond trying to keep up with their turbo-charged energy, being attentive to their emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing leaves many youth workers parched, if not totally dry. Seek out someone you trust for honest and open Christian conversation. Spend time in Christian community with other adults where you will be fed and fueled.

Confirmation

Invite your older youth to take on meaningful leadership roles in your confirmation ministry program as a way to curtail post-confirmation dropout. Consider asking older teens to provide devotions, serve on the music team, prepare skits or lead group-building games. Use your high school techno-wizards to help with computers or audiovisual equipment for confirmation classes and related activities. Younger youth will be encouraged in their faith as they see their older friends using their gifts actively in church.

Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities

Help youth see and feel what following Jesus looks like. Mentoring and peer ministry are two ways to encourage youth. Regular contact with an adult trusted friend and Christian guide is a sure way to help a young person imitate the attitudes and behaviors that mark a lifelong Christlike journey.

ENCOURAGE Youth group activities

continued

Provide opportunities for your youth to connect with other Christian youth in a variety of settings. Take them to synod, regional or churchwide youth events. Provide scholarships for your youth to attend a Lutheran Outdoor Ministry camp. Consider partnering with other congregations in your community by hosting an ecumenical youth rally!



Home and family

Find creative ways to link arms with parents and to undergird their role as primary faith nurturers. Raising teens is tough work. Consider hosting a simple breakfast for parents during which you discuss issues parents are facing with their children. Use this opportunity as time to equip your parents with helpful resources to encourage home-based faith conversation.



Congregational connections

Enlist a group of adults, young adults and children to be a network of support and encouragement to the youth of the congregation. Invite this “booster club” to consider various ways they can actively support the youth in your congregation.

Suggested resources for ENCOURAGE

Peer Ministry Training: Basic Curriculum, Barbara Varenhorst, Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College. 877/239-2492 or www.augsburg.edu/yfi.

Intensive Caring: Practical Ways to Mentor Youth, Group Publishing. ISBN: 0-7644-2068-2. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

Successful Youth Mentoring: A Step-by-Step Guide, Group Publishing. ISBN: 0-7644-2104-2. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

S E R V E



Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in truth and action.

— 1 John 3:18

Jesus served others. As he did so on numerous occasions, his actions not only benefited those in need, but also served to inspire and motivate his disciples to do the same. Meaningful inspiration for this faith practice is found in the story of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). When the servants filled the jars with water, they were acting in a way that was sensitive to the needs of the community and responsive to the voice of Jesus. As Christians, we have no other choice than to love Jesus by loving others. Youth especially welcome the opportunity to respond to Jesus' example by putting their faith into action as followers and servants. However, youth today are not interested in simple "busy work." They seek integrity and want to make a difference as instruments of peace, agents of compassion and witnesses of God's love in a broken world. For many youth, there is nothing that has greater impact on their spiritual lives than their involvement in service projects.



You, as youth nurturer

As a youth leader, your actions, and especially your attitude, will be under close scrutiny by the youth who see you as a role model. Adopt the heart and the lifestyle of a servant leader by remembering your responsibility as a member of God's global family. Help develop a sensitivity to justice and action:

- Do you use language that respects the whole people of God as an inclusive and richly diverse community?
- Do you model stewardship of the earth's resources by limiting your use of disposable paper products or gasoline in the car?
- Do you take time to vote in government elections?
- Do you promote healthy living by serving nutritious snacks and avoiding unnecessary food waste?
- When you use contemporary music or movies with youth, are you previewing them for themes that edify the body of Christ?



Confirmation

Enrich your confirmation program by including "service projects" that focus on experiential learning. Help young people live out their faith and the church's mission through action. Avoid the trap of adults deciding what young people will do. Invite your class to explore the needs and issues in your congregation, community and around the world. Guide them through a process that will give them ownership from start to finish in a service project that matches their gifts and interests.

S E R V E
continued



Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities

Address advocacy as a way to be active in faith. Help your young people take an honest look at what it means to “carry the cross” at the dawn of a new millennium. Use newspapers, magazines and movie clips to explore current issues of justice, ethics, ecology, hunger, empowerment, health wholeness, violence and government policy. Introduce your youth to organizations such as Bread for the World or Advocacy International. Show them how to find postal and e-mail addresses to contact government officials. Learn how to be letter-writing advocates by visiting the Web site of the Lutheran Office of Governmental Affairs.



Youth group activities

Offer a variety and balance of service opportunities (e.g., collecting soup can labels, Crop Walk, food pantry, Christmas mitten tree, etc.). Respect individuality by remembering that God will be encountered in special and unique ways, and that the level of enthusiasm and participation will vary with each person and each project. Familiarize yourself with mission trip opportunities, servant camps or Christian work weekends. There are a variety of resources (www.elca.org/dcm/camps/journey) to help you in the planning process. For mission trips or work camps, allow for up to a year to sufficiently gather funds, recruit adult companions, tend to group building, educate with safety and cultural orientation, and engage in serious prayer and Bible study as a foundation for the mission ahead. A great deal of effort goes into planning for these kinds of trips, but youth and adults find these to be life-transforming experiences.



Home and family

Provide families with a listing of service opportunities they can do together or with other families. Make it easy for families to engage in projects by creating your own service directory that includes opportunities at church, in the community and across the globe. Balance the list with one-time opportunities, seasonal events and ongoing projects. Be sure to include a brief description of the task, age-appropriate information, contact names and phone numbers.

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S E R V E
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Congregational connections

Plan an intergenerational service project, sponsored by the youth group, for the whole congregation. God intends us to be in community and work together. The adult and green-haired teenager standing side by side will talk about much more than the Habitat house they are painting. The 7th graders and senior adults assembling health kits together will discover laughter and engage in conversations about school, life experience and faith. A common project focused on the needs of others is a perfect “nest” in which trust, respect and caring relationships will grow.

***Suggested resources for* SERVE**

Beyond Leaf Raking, Peter Benson and Eugene Roehlkepartain, Abingdon Press. ISBN: 0-687-2132. Available from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

Lutheran Office of Governmental Affairs, www.loga.org.

ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Response, www.elca.org/co/hunger.

Journeys for Youth, ELCA Youth and Outdoor Ministries, www.elca.org/dcm/camps/journey.



G I V E



“As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.”

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Jesus taught generosity of heart, spirit and possessions. He taught that God is generous and that those who seek to serve God are called to practice the same generosity. Jesus taught that God is trustworthy and that we can live without fear. We can live trusting in God's abundance. Those who learn to trust also learn to give. Those who learn to give discover joy.



You, as youth nurturer

Model generous behavior yourself and invite youth to take a critical look at cultural norms. Recognize that there are numerous cultural influences that oppose generosity. Many in our culture claim fulfillment comes from getting more, consuming, hoarding and self-centered living. These messages may carry a lot of weight with your youth. On the other hand, youth are often very generous and very impressed with the behavior of genuinely generous people. Be aware of this tension.



Confirmation

Use your lessons on the first article of the Apostles' Creed and Luther's explanation as an opportune time to talk about values, needs, generosity and giving. Use magazine ads or television commercials to start conversations about needs vs. wants and God's promise to provide us with all we need from day to day.



Youth Sunday school or midweek learning opportunities


Teach the example of Jesus without apology. Familiarize youth with Jesus' teaching regarding generous living. Find relevant language and examples to bring the message alive for youth. Help youth discover people and needs that might benefit from their generosity. Use 1 Timothy 6:17-19 to help youth explore their own wealth (self, time, abilities, spiritual gifts, possessions, money, dreams, visions, hope, health) and the call to be generous with their "riches." Avoid dwelling on money or possessions as the only kind of wealth. On the other hand, do not overlook the fact that money and possessions are part of the wealth over which most youth have some control. Encourage youth to be regular in their financial giving as well as with their time and abilities.

to next page

G I V E
continued

 **Youth group activities**

Engage your youth group in a conversation about how they might give back in response to the many ways they are supported by the congregation, their parents and their leaders. Many congregations offer financial support by supporting “fund-raising” efforts prior to mission trips or youth gatherings. Spend time with your youth to explore ways they might reciprocate. There are countless ways youth can return thanks, many of them not money-based.

 **Home and family**

Provide resources and an opportunity for families to talk together about giving. Parents who are strongly committed to the faith practice of giving will want to instill in their children the concept of “tithing” beginning at a very early age. Fraternal organizations such as Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood have helpful resources to assist parents with this conversation.

 **Congregational connections**

Include youth in the planning and implementation of your year round stewardship program. Invite youth to share a stewardship drama during worship. Show them that their leadership and giving is valued by all in the congregation.

Suggested resources for G I V E

Lifestyles of the Rich and Faithful: A Stewardship Education Resource for Youth, ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries. ISBN: 60000286-0. 800/638-3522, ext. 2432.

Choices & Challenges: Stewardship Strategies for Youth, Dan Dick, Discipleship Resources United Methodist Church. ISBN: 0-88177-135-X. 800/685-4370 or www.discipleshipresources.org.

The Money Dream, Evergreen Youth Television Video. Available from your synod resource center or by contacting the Rev. Philip Reitz, 800/755-5831, ext. 104.

final thoughts:

f a i t h p r a c t i c e s f o r y o u t h

While all seven faith practices are part of the balanced life of discipleship, individually, your youth may find themselves more interested in or comfortable with one or two of the practices. This has much to do with the way God has wired and gifted each person as a unique individual. Individual God-given interests, skills, styles of learning, personality traits and inclinations toward technology, art or ideas all play a part in how each individual engages the journey called discipleship. Beyond these attributes, God has also gifted each individual with spiritual gifts.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift....The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

— *Ephesians 4:7, 11-13*

A helpful way to begin this conversation with your youth is through the use of a new spiritual and relational gift inventory for youth developed in preparation for the 2000 ELCA Youth Gathering. Utilize this resource to help youth understand their own gifts and how to put them into action as disciples. Encourage them to stretch beyond the one or two practices they most appreciate to consider all seven practices as part of a balanced life of discipleship.

Dancing with your Gifts: An Inventory of Spiritual and Relational Gifts for Youth, Diane Monroe, ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries. ISBN: 6-0001-1749-3 or take the inventory on-line at www.elca.org/evangelism/assessments/spiritgifts.html.

Seven practices and your ministry with youth
You've considered the seven faith practices highlighted within the Call to Discipleship with suggestions made for a variety of contexts within which you might work. Use or adapt the grid on the following page as a personal planning tool to consider the possibilities for programming or emphases that work best for the youth in your setting. Fill in the blanks with the suggestions you value from this resource, but be sure to add your own thoughts and ideas. For added value, adapt the grid for use as a teaching and brainstorming tool with your youth in their planning. May God bless you and your youth in your walk with Jesus.

¹*Growing Teen Disciples*, Frank Mercadante, Ave Maria Press. ISBN: 0-87793-652-8. 800/282-1865.

²*Up the Creek with a Paddle: Building Effective Youth and Family Ministry* by Paul Hill. Augsburg Fortress. ISBN: 0-866-3703-X. 800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org.

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planning grid for Calling Youth to Discipleship

You, as Youth Nurturer	Confirmation	Youth Learning Opportunities	Youth Group Activities	Home and Family	Congregational Connections
Pray					
Study					
Worship					
Invite					
Encourage					
Serve					
Give					