

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH YEAR Leader's Guide



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BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

TEACHING YOUTH IN EPISCOPAL CHURCHES

The aim of Christian education in Episcopal Church parishes and congregations is to assist every member in living out the covenant made in Holy Baptism (*The Book of Common Prayer*, page 304). Hence, the common ministry of leaders and youth focuses on matters of both faith and practice:

- **Faith** in God who made heaven and earth, in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and in the Holy Spirit who is Lord and giver of life.
- **Practice** of worship and prayer, of repentance and obedience, of loving service to all persons, and of active pursuit of God's justice and peace in the world.

The content of our faith and practice is continually re-examined and corrected as we search Holy Scripture and the preserved tradition of the Church.

In the words of the Baptismal Covenant, we promise to “continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305). Holy Eucharist, the central act of worship for Christians, unites us with Jesus Christ our Lord. Again and again, as we partake of this sacrament, we remember and celebrate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

We are called to follow Jesus, the Son of God, who lived among us as teacher, preacher, and healer. Through his powerful example, Christians have come to understand that the act of teaching is fundamental to our faith.

Teaching Is a Ministry

All Christians are teachers. Our daily lives bear witness to what we believe and treasure. Youth and leaders in the church are poised to share a singular experience that goes beyond the facts and activities of the moment. The aim of Christian education is to assist all members of the Church to discern the signs and spirits of the age and to bring sound theological judgment to bear upon what we observe and experience.

The educative task in a parish or mission is a joint effort of clergy, parents, leaders, and others in the congregation. We cannot rely solely on organized classes for the instruction and nurturing of individuals. With the help and support of the whole congregation, by word and example, by prayers and witness, we seek to bring up young people in the Christian faith and way of life.

Guidelines for Youth

The teenage years can be a time of special opportunities for encountering the invigorating challenge and abiding hope of the Christian gospel. Adolescents are continuing their journeys as full members of the Church, capable of taking part in all aspects of its governance and mission in the world. Within the Baptismal Covenant, this means worshiping and learning in the Christian community, resisting evil, proclaiming the Good News of

God in Christ, seeking to serve Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of all human beings.

The scriptural teachings of our faith should be affirmed in programs for adolescents. Faith fosters a personal relationship with God and enriches every human relationship. Youth need the Church's encouragement to think critically and independently as they mature in faith.

The ongoing process of faith formation takes on particular relevance for adolescents who are coming up against questions of personal identity and life choices. That is why churches need to focus on welcoming and including young persons in every possible way.

Gifts of Youth. Adolescence is a time of questioning, debating, and searching. The faith of young Christians thrives when they are enabled to use their own talents and abilities in pursuit of the Church's mission, working with their peers alongside experienced adults.

Among the gifts adolescents bring are spontaneity, ebullience, vision, creative energies, and the ability to challenge existing structures and habits of the institution. As their convictions find focus and voice, earnest young Christians provide windows into God's presence and sometimes offer surprising perspectives for viewing the nature of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Counter Culture. An increasingly diverse, secular society tends to foster discrete groups with a variety of life styles. There are ever-changing forms of music, art, dress, language, and behavior. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to the societal influences of media presentations, advertising, and marketing. They manifest and live in what is popularly termed "youth culture."

The Christian faith, at its best, has always been a counter culture with a corrective and saving message for all who seek purpose and meaning in their lives. Christian educators strive to be fully informed about where youth are "coming from" in order to explore with mutual respect the claims of God in Christ.

Christian education can help youth to identify the tugging forces in their world. Many teenagers search for strength to handle difficult issues of theology, family life, relationships with friends, peace and justice, and ethics. The challenge is to find appropriate and respectful ways to interact with the vernacular of young people. If, in our ministry with adolescents, we try too hard to speak the language of youth culture, we run the risk of failing to share plainly the Church's good news.

Distinctiveness. Rapid physical, emotional, and intellectual changes occur during the teenage years. Sexual maturation proceeds rapidly. Social awkwardness and self-consciousness are often apparent. The role and timing of developmental changes may vary greatly among boys and girls throughout adolescence.

The challenge of ministry with youth is to meet the specific needs of youth with varied and appealing programs. Education for adolescents necessarily takes on a different look and style from programs for younger learners. An appropriate balance is necessary between active involvement of youth and

lecture and instruction.

Continuity. It is desirable that people who work with youth have a mutually developed sense of purpose. Formal, integrated programs of teaching and learning, using suitable curricular resources, are needed.

At the same time, it is essential to maintain a sense of continuity in Christian education for the entire congregation as one people of God. At all age levels, we have a common need to know who we are as Episcopalians in the worldwide body of Christ.

Flexibility. Episcopal congregations schedule teaching and learning in different ways and at different times. Realistic assessment of the time demands on youth is essential in planning programs for adolescents. It is important to take into account young persons' commitments within their families and the wider community.

The principle of flexibility is particularly appropriate for developing study materials for use in the Church's ministry with adolescents. Especially desirable are themes study that can be adjusted to varying lengths of time, with modules designed to be arranged in a variety of sequences.

Groupings. Experience in general education suggests a workable approach for grouping adolescents: *Younger Youth* (ages 12-14, Junior High or Middle School grades) and *Older Youth* (ages 15-18, Senior High grades). In congregations where multiple groups are not feasible, a single youth group is best supported by flexible resources, adaptable to a range of developmental levels and interests.

UNDERSTANDING YOUNGER YOUTH

Who are the younger youth we teach? The key to understanding this age group lies in a heart-felt, enduring respect for youth as individuals. Such respect, accompanied by knowledge of the differences among us, shapes all our efforts as teachers.

Look closely at any group of young people, and it is readily apparent that on physical characteristics alone, there is considerable diversity within the group. Reflect further on the impact of different social and ethnic backgrounds, economic circumstances, schooling opportunities, skills and interests, and it becomes quite clear that narrow descriptions do not reflect the dizzying array of social and cultural diversity present among youth of the same chronological age. To teach youth as individuals requires that we first see them as individuals. We can turn to important sources of information:

- **Developmental theory** offers insights for the teaching task. Customarily, educators have looked primarily to such theories for help in understanding the growth and development of children. Younger youth are well past the early stages of development, however, and no single developmental viewpoint appears to be adequate by itself to provide a comprehensive basis for planning instruction.

- **Literature** is another source. Stories of youth enable adults to reconnect with adolescents and to experience, vicariously, radically different life-shaping situations.
- **Experiences** of teachers themselves can contribute much reliable information, including memories of their own journeys as young people.

Taken in combination, these three sources—theory, literature, and experience—contribute to a distinctive multi-dimensional perspective on the lives and learning of young people. This blend of insights will be especially helpful for teachers in church school settings.

Theory—A Source of Information

Developmental theories help us to see the expected, sequential patterns of change from birth through maturity. All theories of development hold that increasing maturity brings a general increase in the complexity of behavior. Children move away from self-centeredness toward more social autonomy. Regardless of whether a theory uses ages or stages, the emphasis is on general expectations. No theory can completely predict the behavior of an individual.

Most of the mainstream theories were formulated without particular regard for the effect of gender. Today, we are living (and teaching) amidst a greater sensitivity to issues of developmental differences between girls and boys. (See Carol Gilligan's book, *In a Different Voice*, for an enlightening discussion on this topic.)

Thinking. We owe much to the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, for underscoring the fact that the ability to think and forms ideas changes as one matures and develops. Using cognitive stages, which may be loosely associated with ages, he defined the ways of knowing that move from sensing to concrete knowing to abstract thinking. According to Piaget, younger youth have just begun to use increasingly complex mental operations and are no longer constricted by what they can see. They can think about situations from more than one point of view, handle several ideas at once, and can move back and forth in relation to a particular idea. Around age eleven, the most advanced level of cognitive functioning may be reached. At this point, youth (and presumably, all adults) can imagine possibilities, reason abstractly, and think across time—past, present and future. All individuals move back and forth in these stages when new and unfamiliar concepts are encountered.

A note of caution: Cognitive theories do not specify *what* content students should be thinking about. And, perhaps more critically, Piaget's stages of knowing do not uniformly apply to youth from different social-cultural environments. Many observers feel that variations in life experience can dramatically alter the ages at which various types of cognitive functioning are likely to emerge.

Social context. During the adolescent years, youth increase and consolidate previous developmental gains in the context of an enlarging social group—family, friends, and community. Personal interests dictate much of what they are most likely to do. Parental supervision is giving way to self-supervision and independence.

Erik Erikson's work postulates a view of development that interweaves the powerful impact of social context with ongoing biological maturation. According to Erikson, at each of eight stages in life a major psychosocial crisis must be resolved in order for development to proceed. In Stage V, the teenage years, the dominant developmental crisis revolves around identity versus role-confusion. It is a period of confusion, searching, and experimenting with a variety of roles for future choices. A sense of loyalty for different groups often causes conflict within an individual.

Work by Lawrence Kohlberg, related to moral development, has melded ideas from both social and cognitive theory. With maturation, experience, and expanding strategies for thinking, youth and adults approach and resolve moral dilemmas in more complex ways.

Each of these theorists gives us a broader insight into the complicated interactive processes of development. While none of them specifically addresses the growth of religious thought, their work has underscored recent efforts to depict faith development for children and adults.

Literature—A Source of Understanding

Literature helps to expand our awareness of the wide variety of experiences of adolescents. Whatever the circumstances of our own youth, literature offers a credible opportunity to “walk in someone else's moccasins.” Teachers of younger youth will be enriched by reading some of the novels about the struggles of young people.

Contemporary writers such as Madeleine L'Engle, and Cynthia Voight introduce us to a modern generation of youth with complex issues, fantasies, struggles, and challenges which reflect still another generation's efforts to deal with the universal themes. David Elkind and Michael Warren have written prophetically about the stressful and hurried lives of youth today.

Experience—A Source of Connection

The teen-age years are for most people traumatic. Very few individuals would wish to relive their teen years.

Ask yourself: In seventh grade, who were your friends? Your neighbors? Your favorite teachers? In the eighth grade? Ninth grade? How did you spend your time outside of school? Lastly, how many times have you said to a young person, “When I was your age, I”

Our own youth—with all the glories and all the miseries—generally becomes a subjective yardstick for measuring the events in the lives of our students. On a rational level, we know that students today have vastly different experiences at school, in the community, and with friends. The textures of their daily environments, both physical and economic, are critically different. Space missions are routine, and viewers literally watch in real-time as wars are televised.

Nevertheless, certain aspects of adolescents remain virtually unchanged across the years. Successes, failures, feelings, doubts, joys, and struggles remain a vital part of students' daily lives. Universal themes are evident in the questions youth ask and the answers they seek: “Who am I? Whose am I? Why am I here? What should I do? Where am I going?” It is essential to

acknowledge that these themes exist. They were part of our own youth and now become a powerful link with today's students.

Faith in the Classroom

Faith is a gift from God.
We are people of faith.

These two premises underlie all that we say and do in church school classrooms. It is faith that gives church school its unique mission. We do not teach faith. We can surely hope that our work as teachers will nurture faith in the hearts and minds of our students.

Structure of faith

Teachers can interpret the actions and responses of their students better by knowing that faith is personal, always changing and growing. A widely-discussed model of faith development uses a pyramid framework of ages and stages to illuminate modal characteristics of faith across the life cycle.

According to James Fowler, younger youth are literalists (Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith), looking primarily beyond the family to other spheres. Faith provides a basis for identity.

In contrast, John Westerhoff uses the image of concentric rings to portray how faith grows and matures within the web of relationships in a faith community. In his model, the faith of adolescents is one of belonging to a faith community (affiliative faith) yet moving beyond to question the faith of our parents (searching faith). The title of Westerhoff's book, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (1976), still resonates among leaders in Christian education.

Who are Youth?

Volumes have been written on adolescent development. The purpose here is to give leaders of this program some key pointers about the characteristics of younger youth to enable leaders to become effective teachers. This is not an exhaustive list and must be generalized. It is, however, important to be aware of these qualities and needs.

Characteristics of younger youth:

- **They like to have fun.** Fun is not the opposite of learning nor should fun be seen as something to be avoided. On the contrary, people learn best when they are having a good time. When youth are having a good time, they often make a lot of noise. Don't be afraid of a little commotion if most of the group are on task. Encourage your teens to have fun in your class and see how much they will learn.

- **Seek identity.** Younger youth are in an energetic process of seeking who they are, while at the same time, fearing that they may find out. Two key words for the wise leader are: accept and affirm. Accept

each person as he or she is; look for qualities in each that you like. Don't try to change them. Affirm the skills, talents, questions, concerns and uniqueness of each person in an intentional way.

- **Like-making choices.** Many adults believe that younger youth should not be allowed to make decisions for themselves because they are too immature. Some people teach without seeking input or options from those they are teaching. Youth make decisions all the time. Our gift to them to help them to develop their abilities to make good decisions and to treat them as capable human beings.
- **Need to be heard.** One of the best tools you can provide for younger youth are opportunities to speak out and be heard, and to listen to others in the group with respect. It is important to set the example not by what you say but by what you do. Your ability to listen to youth and respond to their ideas and comments will be a model for their own listening skills. Being heard for even a moment can be a powerful experience.
- **Seek approval.** Approval from peers and adults is essential at this age. This need for attention and approval can lead to various expressions of behavior. Some youth will be over-achievers, trying to please by standing out above the rest. Others will seek attention by how they dress, or by the language they use. The skilled leader looks for ways to offer appropriate approval, acceptance, and affirmation while still providing guidelines, boundaries, and expectations.
- **Want to be valued and significant.** How you treat the younger youth in your class is much more important than what you teach. If youth feel important and significant, they are more likely to learn something from the class. It is also crucial to pay attention to how the teens treat each other. The atmosphere of the classroom can enliven or poison the whole experience. Encouraging youth to behave in respectful ways to adults and to one another may be the most important lesson you can teach. Many youth in today's church school classes come from different schools, belong to different clubs and organizations, inside and outside of their schools. Building a successful group that reaches out in hospitality to newcomers and those on the fringes is one of the main goals of working with younger youth. It is also the message of the gospel.
- **More interested in who's there than what is taught.** The friendships that already exist and the friendships that develop are often the motivating factor for attendance and learning. The skilled teacher supports and encourages these relationship while trying to avoid cliques that exclude others. A key word here is inclusiveness.
- **Growing and changing.** Everything about this time in the lives of younger youth calls them to growth in mind, body and spirit. The hunger to grow (often subconscious) is a great ingredient for learning.

Youth want to know more about the things that affect their lives. This includes God and knowing Jesus Christ. However, they also change constantly which makes them unpredictable. Accept these deep down longings and ever-changing attitudes as gifts.

- **Looking for a faith of their own.** Younger youth are seeking their own opinions, values, and faith. Their identity comes from becoming their own person. Youth often reject much of their parent's faith. This is an important sign that new values and a stronger faith are being formed. Embrace the searching process and affirm the importance of the ability to question, doubt and think. Your response to their doubts will encourage or discourage their journeys to spiritual knowledge. Their questions will ultimately lead to faith.

WHO ARE LEADERS?

Leaders of youth are more than teachers. To foster effective teaching and learning among its adolescent members, the Church needs adult leaders who are grounded in their own faith and identity as Christians. Effective leaders are excited about growing and learning and enjoy working with youth in a team relationship. They have high energy, genuine enthusiasm, and a passionate interest in youth.

Because church leaders are expected to have a unique relationship with youth, the teacher/student relationship does not work well on Sunday morning with younger youth. Teens have been in that role all week and want something different. While it is important to share knowledge, it is more important to develop a group that can share their faith. Here are some characteristics commonly found in effective youth leaders.

- **Rooted in their faith and committed to Jesus Christ.** Who leaders are speaks loudly to teens. This doesn't mean that leaders have to be biblical scholars or perfect Christians. It also doesn't mean they no longer have any doubts or are at the end of their own spiritual journey. Good leaders have a strong relationship with God and are comfortable with their faith.
- **Is Willing to be a part of a team.** Helping a young person to grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord is an overwhelming task. It is essential for leaders to understand that they do not have sole responsibility for this task. Wise leaders know that they are not only part of a teaching team but also part of a network of people in the church who care about and support young people.
- **Is fun and enjoys being with young people.** A key phrase to help leaders is “relax and enjoy.” Effective leaders know how to have fun and to share joy with young people without giving up expectations of them. Leaders must find their own balance of fun and seriousness. Affirming joy and excitement with the group, however, is essential for the leaders' full participation.

- **More concerned about people than facts.** The ECY provides an excellent base of information to learn more about God, scripture and the Church. The sessions incorporate this learning with the issues that effect young people's lives. Effective leaders are aware of issues that are unique to their groups and look for ways to include these ideas in their presentations. When leaders give priority to what youth are thinking and feeling, the content follows.
- **Has a long-term commitment to the group.** Good leaders are committed and consistent. There will be ups and downs, and successes and failures. Some weeks the youth may be impossible to reach, but the steadfastness of faith and commitment to the class will make a real difference in the long run. Focus on the overall success of the program and not on any one moment, hour, or week.

Building the Team

The *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* is designed to be used with a team approach. Having more than one leader allows young people to have a variety of models of Christian faith. Young people relate to different adults in unique ways. This range of relationships and friendships is important. Also, the team approach allows for mutual support of the adult leaders.

Sometimes an adult leader will see an issue raised by a youth as a challenge to authority. Another leader may have a different perception of what is causing the conflict and be able to step in to maintain the relationships. It is also essential for reasons of safety and protection to have teams of adults working together at all times. Finally, each person has different gifts. When each of the gifts are given together they far exceed the gifts of one individual.

The best way to function well as a team is to spend a block of time together before the year begins. It is ideal to have eight to ten hours for this purpose. The team may decide to meet several times or go on retreat somewhere for this purpose. The team should decide which setting works best for them.

Suggested activities to help the team plan their strategies are outlined below:

- **Begin with social time** together, including sharing basic facts about each other.
- **Share faith stories.** A simple way to do this is to ask people to make a chart from birth to the present showing the highlights and low moments of their faith journey. Allow time for everyone to finish before sharing so each person can listen to each presentation.
- **Make a list of each person's gifts** and identify the gifts, talents or interests that he or she would like to contribute to the class.

- **Working Together.** Discuss how the team will work together including roles, tasks, and schedules. Be sure to include in your discussion how young people will be used as leaders in this program (see section on youth as leaders).
- **Review the curriculum materials** together and discuss the best ways for the team to use them.
- **Planning.** Draw up a plan for the year with clear responsibilities for each team member.
- **Leaders need information and training.** Any effective leadership program begins with the sharing of information and the training of skills. This is no less true for Christian leaders. The ECY offers materials to provide a strong base of information about scripture, theology and the Church.
- **Teamwork does not mean just rotating Sundays.** A true team requires blending-together time, talents, skills and gifts. The team should discuss and clarify the ways they will work together before beginning. The team should feel both energized and excited as they initiate this venture.

Youth as Leaders

Young people are able to assume responsibility for their own learning. As leaders they help to plan and to carry out programs. It is imperative that adolescents develop a sense of real ownership and personal investment in the Church's life and mission. They need assurance that their decisions and contributions are respected and valued.

A basic premise of this curriculum is to not only teach students but also raise up Christian leaders. Many young people have outstanding leadership qualities. These qualities can be used to develop an exciting program of learning and growth. Often adult leaders overlook or ignore the leadership capabilities of younger youth who have so much to offer. Do not make this mistake. The following list will help you to recognize, build, and utilize the youth leadership of the group.

- **Sharing Information.** In order for youth to participate effectively in planning for and leading a group, they must have the basic information available to leaders and be able to make choices of their own.
- **Training usually involves practice.** Allowing the teens to try out new ideas, theologies and skills in a safe environment is a great way to train them for leadership roles. Giving them opportunities to lead the group is a way to practice the gifts and talents that God has given them.
- **Young people are not “blank slates.”** The youth in the group come

with a richness of ideas, thoughts, opinions, and experiences. They are not empty, inexperienced human beings just waiting to receive facts and gems of wisdom. They have as much to teach as they have to learn. Often they are so used to being treated like “blank slates” that they are reluctant to share all that they have to offer. When they trust that their experiences and opinions are valued, a whole new world of information, learning and sharing will open up. Encourage this process, and be patient if it takes some time for it to develop.

- **People deserve input into decisions that affect their lives.** Youth in your program deserve to have input into their learning process. Often adult leaders plan the sessions with little or no involvement from those they are trying to reach. This often leads to apathetic learning. Also, the adults miss the benefit of the wisdom and understanding of the youth about their needs, desires and insights. Although the process will be different in each situation, be intentional about learning from the youth both before beginning and then during the sessions.
- **Young people should be responsible for their own learning.** One way to value the participants in the group is to allow them to take responsibility for their learning. This means agreeing ahead of time what will be learned and how the learning will be carried out. A contract or covenant should be established with the group, and the adult leader should hold people accountable to what they have agreed. It will take time to develop the trust for this to happen, but the benefit is enormous.
- **Leadership skills apply to all facets of life.** If adult leaders are successful at lifting up youth leaders, the skills developed will affect other areas of the youth's lives. Youth group members will find themselves involved in leadership roles in their schools, families, churches and other organizations. They will have discovered tools that will last them the rest of their lives. These skills along with their Christian faith will make an impact on all with whom they come in contact.
- **Forming a youth leadership team.** Although a youth leadership team will have many variations depending on each situation, it is recommended that one is formed. This may be as simple as gathering a few young people ahead of time to review the materials and make suggestions on how best to use this curriculum. A team of youth that meet with the adult team regularly and share in planning for the sessions can be developed. Certain sessions or projects could be given to a small group of youth to let them “run with it.” It is important that the adult leaders build in some time to plan the role of young people as leaders of this curriculum.

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THE EPISCOPAL CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH

The Curriculum uses a cumulative framework of twelve modules to be used over a period of years. Designed for Younger Youth who may be in Middle School or Junior High, it provides choices for leaders and youth to compose their own unique sequence of lessons. Three of the modules focus on Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures), three on the New Testament, and three on Contemporary Times. Within each stream are the archetypes of **Call, Covenant, and Community**. In addition three modules are on the basics of *Sacraments, The Episcopal Church Year, and Spiritual Life*.

A Tool for Teachers

The aim of the *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth* (ECY) is to sustain and

strengthen the ministry of teaching in the Episcopal Church. The curriculum's focus on classroom-based efforts does not deny the importance of youth groups, confirmation classes, retreats or other patterns of Christian education in a local congregation. It does reflect an intentional decision to affirm the act of teaching and spotlight the respective roles of teachers and learners.

The curriculum is a tool for teachers. It serves as a resource to help teachers formulate answers to three pivotal questions:

- **What do I teach?** The curriculum offers a series of modules on twelve different topics. Leaders using the materials are expected to pursue actively an adult-level understanding of the content of the session outlines, taking seriously their own roles as learners.
- **Whom do I teach?** Leaders are challenged anew to adapt to both the developmental characteristics of the group as well as the particular interests of each individual. The ECY addresses issues of developmental differences from two important perspectives. Content is developmentally appropriate, using Scripture as a basis for exploring issues with younger youth. Within each session provisions are made in activity suggestions for varying degrees of skill and learning styles among students.
- **How do I teach?** The curriculum was written for leaders by clergy and laity who work with youth. Options and guidelines are included to help leaders make adjustments to fit local circumstances. Embedded in the kaleidoscope of optional activity suggestions given for every session are practical comments and specific tips for guiding the process of learning.

It is hoped that leaders who use the ECY will be nurtured, inspired, and enriched personally as they prepare to teach and learn and as they reflect on their efforts.

Teachers will find that the session outlines in this guide provide support and structure for the inexperienced and both challenge and flexibility for the more confident. It is highly recommended that every leader have ready access to a Bible (NRSV), *The Book of Common Prayer*, and *The Hymnal 1982*. Each session includes the following:

- **Objective** statement, to state the concepts along with objectives.
- **Background for Leaders and Personal Views**, to provide factual background and personal inspiration.
- **Tips on the Topic**, to offer useful information about working with this age group.
- **Weavings**, to prompt thinking about how this session fits into the year, vocabulary, and current events.
- **Look For**, to provide thoughts on follow-through of the session.

USING THE CURRICULUM

Planning Class Sessions

Planning sets the stage for teaching and learning. In preparation for

meeting with students, teachers need to *select* a set of activities, and then put these activities into an *order* for each class meeting. The session outlines of the Episcopal Curriculum for Youth offer three sets of activity categories that can be used to compose a class session. These are:

Teacher Supports—six sections directed at helping teachers prepare.

Essential Activities—Coming Together, Engaging, and Going Forth are the three core experiences for each session.

Optional Activities—a variety of different suggestions of activities, which teachers may choose to do in a given session. *No teacher or class is expected to use every optional activity in any session outline. The stress is on choice.*

The session categories function as the building blocks for planning. There is no single, “right” way to plan a class session. Teachers can construct an activity/time schedule for each class session that fits the time available, builds on their own skills, and meets the needs and interests of youth.

Teachers facilitate classroom activities through interactive planning with youth. Teens will be able to exercise leadership roles in choosing and implementing what they wish to explore. Students' interests will strongly affect the direction of theme exploration and conversation.

Teachers understand their students. Students deserve attention, affirming experiences, and reasonable challenges. To nurture and guide the faith journey of another person demands a personal relationship. Bonds of trust, respect, and affection grow where caring and understanding prevail.

Teachers are interpreters. Students can expect honest answers to their questions—including the response, “I don't know.” In classroom situations, what students talk about, question, explore, and wonder about reflects their teachers' ability to mediate and interpret faith and heritage. Often the simplest of questions can evoke profound discussion.

Youth can be intensely interested in wrestling with “real-world” ethical issues. As teachers and students engage in conversations of faith, they are sharing feelings and values, as well as words and facts. In a very real sense, teachers expose their beliefs when they engage in conversation with youth.

The Learning Environment

The setting where the group meets is crucial to the success of the program. In short, the less like a classroom it is, the more you will be able to facilitate learning, sharing, and growth. Pay attention to the environment you are providing, as this will make a great impact on the learning process.

Consider three possibilities to create the desired environment.

- **The youth room.** One good alternative is a room at the church designated for young people and arranged with comfortable chairs,

couches, etc. This provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.

- **Meeting in a home.** Holding meetings at someone's home who lives nearby the church can be a great asset. This provides a casual, comfortable setting that usually enhances the process. This may provide some logistical problems for younger youth but it is well worth investigating. Also, people may be more open to making their homes available if it is done on a rotating basis. Don't rule out this possibility without carefully considering it.
- **Gathering in a restaurant.** A restaurant can provide a wonderful opportunity for a meal, fellowship, and learning. Often young people who wouldn't come to the church will feel comfortable in this setting. Of course, this will raise some financial considerations, but these are not insurmountable. You could also consider meeting at a restaurant on an occasional basis as a way of promoting outreach and for celebration.

A Final Word

Remember that this is a process of helping young people grow in their knowledge and love of the Lord. There will be ups and downs, successes and failures, joys and frustrations. Often you will never know the impact you have made on a young person's life. So much happens intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually at this time in their lives that they themselves are not aware of the people who have had a direct impact. Share the love of Christ with your young people. Remember that God has called us not to be successful but to be faithful. Thanks be to God.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH YEAR

The content of this module focuses on the Episcopal church year and includes introductions to *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal 1982*. Entitled *The Episcopal Church Year*, each session examines an element of the Church year, including seasons, feasts, lectionary, and fasts or the resources, such as the Prayer Book and Hymnal, that help define what it means to be an Episcopalian today. By understanding better the meaning of the liturgy, young people can explore the mystery of their faith in an ever increasingly secular world. Seeing themselves as Christians in the world and responding to God's call to live out the promises of the Baptismal Covenant is the hoped for outcome of this course of study.

The Episcopal Curriculum for Youth provides materials for both leaders and youth.

For Teachers

- **Leader's Guide** (this volume)
Contains 9 sessions of material. The sessions are:

The Book of Common Prayer: *Episcopal Identity*

The Hymnal: *Songs for Worship*
Lectionary: *Bible in the Church*
Advent & Lent: *Seasons of Preparation*
Fasting: *Days of Self Denial*
Celebration: *The Feasts*
Christmas & Easter: *Celebrating the Seasons*
Epiphany & Pentecost: *The Green Seasons*
Saints: *Recognizing Devotion*

■ **Poster Pack**

Offers 6 large sheets of color posters or black-and-white resource posters. Intended for use as a classroom resource.

The Guide and Packet are undated and can be reused. We recommend that congregations have one Leader's Guide for each teacher along with one Poster Pack for each group of youth.

For Students

■ **Session Leaflets** (student leaflets—one for each session)

In attractive, colorful format, each leaflet includes:

Scripture

Commentary and prayer by youth

Illustrations

Voices: thoughts from various authors, politicians, theologians, and others on the session topic

Prayers and words to remember

Bible reflections to read during the week

■ **Bibles and Prayerbooks**

Special editions of the Holy Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer* have been created for the *Episcopal Curriculum for Youth*. It is recommended that each youth have their own copy of these important books of our faith.

■ **Additional Gear**

Backpacks, patches, bookmarks, and bookplates are also available to give youth a sense of belonging and common purpose.

Teaching Resources

Bowman, Locke E., Jr. *Teaching for Christian hearts, souls, and minds*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990.

Farnham, Suzanne G., et. al. *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*. Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1991.

Little, Sara. *To set one's heart: Belief and teaching in the Church*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983.

Harris, Maria. *Teaching and religious imagination*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.

Kujawa, Sheryl A. and Sibley, Lois. *Resource Book for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults in the Episcopal Church*. New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1995.

Music Resources

- Anderson, Joham, compiler. *The Tune Book*. Songs and Creations, Inc., P. O. Box 7, San Anselmo, California 94979, 1994.
- Gather, Volume 1 and Volume 2*. GIA Publications, Inc. 7404 South Mason Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60638, 1994.
- Baptist Hymnal*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1975.
- Glory and Praise, Vol. 2*. Phoenix: North American Liturgy Resources, 1982.
- Glory and Praise, Vol. 3*. Phoenix: North American Liturgy Resources, 1982.
- Lift Every Voice and Sing II*. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1993
- Songs for Celebration. Church Hymnal Series IV*. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1980.

Book of Common Prayer: Episcopal Identity

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

This session provides an introduction to *The Book of Common Prayer*. Youth will be able to explain how *The Book of Common Prayer* provides identity for the Episcopal Church through worship. They will name the major parts of the Prayer Book and state how these parts relate to daily prayer and the cycle of life.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary summarizes the history and contents of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Key terms are Anglican Church and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. For spiritual preparation think about your use of the Prayer Book to guide personal devotions.

Commentary

The Book of Common Prayer is a collection of rites, sacraments, prayers, and guided Scripture readings that give form to daily worship and the lifelong journey of Christian faith in the Episcopal Church. It also contains the Church calendar that outlines the rhythm of seasons and celebrations. The Prayer Book incorporates Scripture throughout its pages which include acts of devotion, customs, and hymns that date back to the earliest Church. *The Book of Common Prayer* is a guide for all Episcopalians in both corporate and private worship.

The Church of England, later known as the Anglican Church, separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1543 during the Reformation. Thomas Cranmer, the Arch

bishop of Canterbury, produced the first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549 and later its 1552 revision. The Anglican Church blended liturgy and structure from the Roman Catholic tradition with its own unique beliefs and practices. Many of its liturgical components date back to pre-Christian Jewish practices.

The Book of Common Prayer is divided into several distinct sections, each one relating to daily prayer and worship, the cycle of human life, or the Church calendar. The Prayer Book recognizes four general categories of worship: regular worship, special days, notable personal occasions, and Episcopal rites that must be performed by a bishop.

Along with the political independence of America came the independence of the Anglican tradition from its English origin. Prior to the American Revolution, colonists used the English prayer book. Americans saw the need for a distinctly American prayer book. The first American version was ratified by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States in 1789. Over the years the Prayer Book was changed by successive General Conventions, most recently in 1979. As elements of the Prayer Book have changed over time, *The Book of Common Prayer* has been revised without altering the fundamental beliefs of Episcopal faith.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**—*O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!*
—Psalm 95:6
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Rufus Jones, Honoré de Balzac, C. S. Lewis, Avery Brooke
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For the Parish (BCP, p. 817)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods; In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Psalm 95:1-7

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Many Episcopalians are only familiar with the Eucharist services in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Encourage the youth to discover how much more this special book offers.
- Be sensitive to youth who may have learning disabilities or difficulty reading. Include alternative activities or work in groups or pairs.
- **Discussion Starter:** Why do you think the Church's book of liturgy is called *The Book of Common Prayer*?

The Book of Common Prayer stands as the identity of the Episcopal Church and demonstrates the uniqueness of the tradition as well as its ties to Anglican and Catholic roots.

Personal Views

Do most Episcopalians pick up and explore *The Book of Common Prayer* with confidence and interest? How familiar are you with *The Book of Common Prayer*? The Prayer Book is a treasure which belongs to all Episcopalians. We can demonstrate through our actions that *The Book of Common Prayer* is important and an integral part of our religious life both at church and in private.

The Prayer Book can also become a part of a joyful and powerful devotional life. Begin by reading daily devotions for individuals and families (BCP, p. 137-140). These are brief forms of prayer for the morning, noon, early evening and end of the day that provide an opportunity to incorporate prayer into the busiest of days. Scripture readings from the lectionary and personal prayers can be incorporated in these devotions. Make these devotions a part of your daily routine for the week prior to meeting with the youth so that you will be able to share this experience with them.

How can we use the Prayer Book to come to know the Bible better? Even more importantly, how can *The Book of Common Prayer* bring us closer to God? How do we pass this heritage to young people?

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and

reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

For the Mission of the Church
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 816

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 1 at the front of the room. Be sure to have Prayer Books for each person in the group if possible. As youth arrive, hand them a question based on the worship service that day. For example: What page in *The Book of Common Prayer* is the collect that was used today? Where is the service that was used during the early worship period? Give them time to find the answers.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Psalm 95:1-7* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, Thank you for The Book of Common Prayer. Thank you for giving us a book which so unites us in our faith. Thank you for giving us this great tool so that we can properly worship you. Amen.

—Michael, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from Psalms, chapter 95, verses 1 through 7.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Ask each person to read the question and answer he or she had from the Coming Together activity.

■ Did you have difficulty finding the answer in *The Book of Common Prayer*?

■ Did you know that the collects and Scripture references are in *The Book of Common Prayer*?

Pass out paper and pencils, and ask the youth to divide in pairs. Ask each pair to design a timeline of an imaginary

person's life. They should include major life events on one side of the line. On the other side of the line, write down appropriate services, prayers, and celebrations from *The Book of Common Prayer* that correspond to the person's life, such as birth, baptism, marriage, and burial. Encourage them to look in the Table of Contents, and then spend some time just looking through the book.

Ask each pair to share their timelines with the group. Look for similarities and differences. Invite them to talk about other parts of *The Book of Common Prayer* that they discovered while doing the timeline.

- How could you use the *Book of Common Prayer* when you are not at church?
- Which part of *The Book of Common Prayer* do you think is most important? Why?

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Worship:** Choose a service from *The Book of Common Prayer* the group is interested in. Read through the service and select appropriate readings and prayers that appeal to the group. Ask for volunteers to take part in the service; the rest of the group can be the congregation. Hang Resource Poster No. 1 at the altar area. If appropriate, invite another group to worship with you.
- **New covers:** Design a new cover for the next edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Decide how the Prayer Book will be used—by youth groups, senior centers,

general worship, or others. Display the covers at your church.

Games

- **Prayer Book jeopardy:** Ask the youth write on index cards jeopardy-style questions about *The Book of Common Prayer*. They can work individually or in small groups. Collect the cards, and divide the group into two teams or let each person play individually. Ask participants to raise their hands when they know the correct answer; a point is deducted for a wrong answer. The game is over when there are no more questions.

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Show a clip of a marriage ceremony from a humorous movie such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* or *Princess Bride*. Identify parts of the marriage service that are similar or different from the service in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 422-438.
- **Print:** Pass out sections of the newspaper to pairs of youth. Ask them to find events, articles and photos that are connected to sections of *The Book of Common Prayer* that deal with the cycle of life (birth, marriage, funeral, others).

WEAVINGS

- Each church of the Anglican Communion, such as the Church of England or the Anglican Church in Australia, has its own prayer book. If you visited an Anglican Church in a country other than the United States, you would be able to participate even if you could not understand the language. In each Anglican church throughout the world, a prayer book with similar wording and structure is used. If possible, look at a prayer book from another English-speaking country and note the similarities and differences from *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- Throughout the *Book of Common Prayer*, there are italicized instructions for conducting the services called *rubrics*. In the first prayer books, directions were printed in red, and over time, the Latin word for red, *rubrica*, was applied to all directions in the prayer book. The rubrics offer opportunities for variation within services and during specific seasons of the church year. Everyone gathered shares a *common* responsibility to participate in the prayers and worship. No one sits idle; all take part.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Worship in Churches (No. 1)

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Read or sing "Help us, O Lord, to learn" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 628). How can *The Book of Common Prayer* help us learn the truth?
- Sing "If Today You Hear God's Voice" (*Gather*, GIA Publications, 82).
- Listen to "Love Song for a Savior" by Jars of Clay from the CD *Jars of Clay*.

Service

- **Game night:** Plan a game night at your church to raise money to purchase Prayer Books for a mission church. Use board games or be creative and make your own. Include games of people of all ages.

Sharing

- **Repair:** Arrange for the youth to mend Prayer Books that are in disrepair.
- **Challenge:** Play the Prayer Book jeopardy game with a group of adults or older teens. Add questions if necessary or ask adults and teens to submit their own questions. At the conclusion, share what you have learned about *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Study

- **Try it:** Attend different services such as Compline, a special Holy Day service, an ordination, a marriage ceremony, or a funeral.

- **Tour:** Visit a religious community that celebrates the daily offices. Often cathedrals and other churches also schedule different services such as noonday prayer and Compline. Select one and visit as a group.
- **Worship lock-in:** Plan a day-long lock-in that includes the daily offices. Allow time to talk about the services. This could be scheduled during Lent or Advent.

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

There is no great future for any people whose faith has burned out.

Rufus Jones

God reveals Himself unfaithfully to the thoughtful seeker.

Honoré de Balzac

Every [church] service. . . "works" best—when, through long familiarity, we don't have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. . . The perfect church service would be the one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.

C. S. Lewis

Thank you, God, for bringing together so many people who love you. Help us to pray and sing as if with one voice and to lose our differences in remembering you.

Avery Brooke

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 817 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray. Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

For the Parish
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 817

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are youth able to explain how *The Book of Common Prayer* gives the Episcopal Church its unique identity? Can they relate the major parts of *The Book of Common Prayer* with daily prayer and the cycle of life? Can they name ways *The Book of Common Prayer* can be used in their own lives?

The Hymnal: Songs for Worship

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

The focus of this session is the music used for worship from *The Hymnal 1982*. The youth will be able to identify familiar hymns and describe how the Hymnal is used in worship.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary looks at the use of hymns throughout the life of the Church. Key people are Thomas Cranmer, Isaac Watts, and Charles and John Wesley. For spiritual preparation, think about the importance of music in your life and the worship of the Church.

Commentary

A hymn is a sacred poem set to music and offered to God by singing or chanting. The book of *Psalms* was the first collection of hymns used by ancient Israel. The early Church continued using psalms and added variations found in the New Testament, including the Magnificat or Mary's Song, (*Luke 1:46-55*) and the Nunc dimittis or Song of Simeon, (*Luke 2:29-32*).

Eventually two forms of hymns emerged in the early Church. One type was designed to express private devotion, and a second was intended to impart doctrine.

During the Reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin altered the content of the Church's hymn collection, insisting that every hymn be grounded in Scripture. From this period came the metrical versions of the psalms still used today.

Hymn singing familiar in churches today began in the 18th century. Writers such as Isaac Watts com-

posed hymns to reflect the spiritual experience of the singer. The Christian hymn "Joy to the World" is perhaps his best known work. Charles and John Wesley also wrote many hymns. Charles is considered the most gifted of all the English hymn writers and is best known for his Easter hymn "Jesus Christ is Risen Today."

By the 19th Century, hymnals were being published for congregational use. Anglican hymn books began identifying particular hymns for the liturgical seasons and sacramental devotion and practice.

The past three decades have produced a renewal in the spiritual life of the Church that has created a "worldwide outburst of creative liturgical and musical activity unprecedented since the reformation" (*The Hymnal 1982*, p. ii). Most notable is the use of alternative forms of worship music such as the folk mass, the inclusion of music from a range of cultures, ecumenical overtones, and the removal of some gender exclusive language.

The Hymnal 1982 contains music for all hours of the day, church seasons, feast and fast days, sacraments, and the discipline of the faith.

For further study: Refer to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music* and *The Hymnal Companion 1982*.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**— . . . *and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.*
—Colossians 3:16b
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Augustine, Mahaila Jackson, Marvin Gaye, Patrick of Ireland
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For Church Musicians and Artists (BCP, p. 819)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Some youth may not be familiar with *The Hymnal 1982*. Give the group time to look at it. Use a popular piece to help them learn how to read a hymn. Explain that the hymns preceded by an "S" are portions of *The Book of Common Prayer* that can also be read by the congregation.
- The use of music varies widely in the Church. Some churches use renewal and ethnic music, while others prefer more traditional forms. Encourage youth to be open minded about expressions of prayer and praise to God.
- Be sensitive to music issues in your congregation. Some people may want to return to the "oldies," while others would like to add guitars.
- **Discussion Starter:** What is your favorite hymn?

Personal Views

Music is an integral part of our lives. It can evoke a memory, create a mood, or alter an experience. Often we associate a song with a significant event or person in our lives. Imagine the most memorable moments in your personal history. Is there a song or a hymn that you associate with it?

Because many of the hymns are based on Scripture, sometimes a familiar tune may come to mind as we read the Bible. Have the words to a hymn or a melody played in your mind during a period of prayer or spiritual reflection?

Do you find yourself greeting old hymns like familiar friends? Teenagers often say that music is the one thing that they cannot do without. Is there a piece of music sung in the church that you cannot live without?

Take time this week to look through the Hymnal and read the words to hymns that catch your eye. Reflect on these words as you prepare for this session.

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,
God of glory, Lord of love; hearts
unfold like flowers before thee,
praising thee, their sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and
sadness; drive the dark of doubt
away; giver of immortal glad-
ness, fill us with the light of day.

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee
The Hymnal 1982, 376

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Bring enough Hymnals for each youth. As they arrive, hand out a bulletin from a worship service and ask them to look up the musical citations. Write the following questions on a chalkboard or paper:

- Were hymns were selected for a reason?
- Which hymn do you like the best? Why?

- When do we use hymns with a number preceded by an "S"?

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Colossians 3:12-17* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Most merciful God, give us

the grace to sing your praise:

the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Give us the joy to praise your name.

Amen.

Leila, Grade 6

Lector: *A reading from The Letter of Paul to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 12 through 17.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Select a theme song with a catchy tune from a popular television program or cartoon that youth are familiar with. The group might also select a showtune from a musical.

Divide into small groups, and ask the youth to compose a song for worship that can be set to the selected tune. They can write about a church season or use the Scripture from the bulletin in the Coming Together activity. One or more of the groups could also compose a hymn for one of the seven Principal Feast Days (Session 6) or for one of the sacraments, such as Baptism.

After the groups are finished, stage a "hymn sing" with each group performing their composition. If appropriate, suggest they add motions or movement with their hymns.

When everyone has performed, refer to the questions raised in the Coming Together activity.

- Can you find any connection between the hymns and the Scripture passages in the church bulletin?
- How many times did the congregation sing?
- Can you match the hymns with

passages from *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible?

- Identify the hymns that reflect praise, thanksgiving, and joy.

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Rounds:** Look up the section on rounds and canons, beginning with number 710 in *The Hymnal 1982*. Select one of the rounds and sing it together. If the group is too small to sing rounds, record the group singing the round a few times, then play the tape while the group harmonizes with itself!
- **Cover design:** Describe the following scenario: A new hymnal is being developed. The publisher wants to produce several covers to make the book more desirable. While the pew version may look similar to *The Hymnal 1982*, other copies should appeal to children, youth, and people of other cultures. Your job is to design a cover for one of these groups. (Materials needed: paper, crayons, markers, paint.)

Games

- **Name that tune:** Compile a list of about 20 familiar hymns that are sung by your church. Ask a youth who can play the piano or other instrument to be the “tune maker.” (If no one plays an instrument, ask one person to hum the tune.) Divide the group into teams to play a version of the game show “Name that Tune!” The game begins with the musicians playing the first few notes of the hymn. The teams take turns guessing

the name of the hymn. After each team has had a turn, the musician adds more notes. The object of the game is to see how many notes must be played before the youth recognize and name the hymn. For bonus points, identify the season of the Church year that the hymn is used.

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch either *Sister Act I* or *Sister Act II*, or just the segments showing the choir singing. Ask the youth to compare this music with the hymns they hear at worship service in their own church.
- **Print:** Music critics write reviews of new albums recently released in magazines and newspapers. *Rolling Stone*, for example, often highlights popular artists whose lyrics have religious themes, such as Jars of Clay. Write a “review” of one of the compositions written during the Engaging activity.

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

WEAVINGS

- This session could be scheduled before a youth-led worship service to help youth in the selection of hymns.
- *The Hymnal 1982* changed the words of some hymns to add more inclusive language, while other hymns were left unchanged. We now sing “Good Christian *friends*, rejoice” (107) instead of “Good Christian men, rejoice.” However the words to “God rest you merry, gentlemen” (105) were left unchanged. Compare the hymns in *The Hymnal 1940* with those in *The Hymnal 1982*. What other words were changed?
- The words of some hymns reflect the times in which they were written. In “Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 567) the writer lists those to be healed as the blind, the deaf, the palsied, the lame, and the leper. If you were writing this hymn today, what diseases or disabilities would you include for the “arm” of the Lord to heal?

- Read or sing “Joyful, joyful, we adore thee” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 376). Who wrote the music for this hymn?
- Learn a song from *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, such as “Bye and Bye” (3). This is an African American hymnal that can be used by any Episcopal church.
- Listen to the “Gregorian Chant” by The Monks of Santiago.

Service

- **Learning about others:** Visit a church service in another denomination to experience alternative ways of using music in worship. Invite youth from the church you visit to attend a worship service at your church. Plan a social time afterwards.
- **Singalong:** Sponsor a parish-wide hymn sing with one or more of your church choirs. For every song requested, ask for a donation for organizations providing services for people who are hearing impaired or for another worthy cause.

Sharing

- **Sing a song:** Share the hymn you wrote for the Engaging activity with a younger group of children. Help them select a tune and write their own hymn.
- **Repairs:** Work with your music director or organist to stage a Hymnal repair party.
- **Top ten:** Poll people at a coffee hour or before worship for their favorite hymns. Use the results to make a list of the “Top Ten Hymns” at your church. Publish the list in the church bulletin or newsletter.

Study

- **Compare:** Locate copies of hymnals from other denominations. Compare the types of hymns in the hymnals with *The Hymnal 1982*. See if favorite hymns found in more than one book have the same words and tunes.
- **Puns:** Look up “Wilt thou forgive that sin, where I begun,” 140, in *The Hymnal 1982*. How many puns can you find? Don't overlook the author of the hymn's words!
- **Concerts:** Check the calendar in your area for local listings of free sacred music concerts.

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

The one who sings prays twice.
Augustine

I sing because I'm happy; and I sing because I'm free.
Mahaila Jackson

Music is one of the closest link-ups with God that we can probably experience. I think it's a common vibrating tone of the musical notes that holds all life together.
Marvin Gaye

I sing as I arise today!
I call on my Creator's might:
The will of God to be my guide,
The eye of God to be my sight,
The word of God to be my speech,
The hands of God to be my stay,
The shield of God to be my strength,
The path of God to be my way.
Patrick of Ireland

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 819 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*
O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of your beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Church Musicians and Artists
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 819

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are the youth able to find music in *The Hymnal 1982* that relates to worship? Were they able to enjoy both the music from the Hymnal and their own music in praise of God?

Lectionary: Bible in the Church

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

The focus of this session is the selection of Scripture for daily and Sunday worship that is found in the lectionary in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Youth will be able to name and locate the two types of lectionaries in *The Book of Common Prayer*. They also will be able to select the appropriate readings for a given Sunday and week day.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary briefly describes the purpose and background of the lectionary. A key person is Archbishop Thomas Cranmer; a key term is lectionary. Think about how you use Scripture in your daily worship as you prepare this session.

Commentary

The lectionary organizes Scripture for worship and preaching around the Principal Feasts, the Holy Days and the liturgical seasons of the Church Year. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the editor of the first *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) hoped to develop an orderly and progressive schedule of Scripture readings for use in the Church in England.

The Daily Office Lectionary (BCP p. 934-1001) assigns readings and psalms over a two year period for the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (BCP pp. 36-102 and 115-126). Those following this lectionary, through the Daily Office or personal study, will read almost the entire Bible in a two year period. The current Daily Office lectionary remains close to Cranmer's original design.

The Lectionary for Sundays (BCP p. 889-931) assigns readings and psalms over a three year period for use at celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. Until the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, the Sunday lectionary used only a one year cycle; the actual Scripture passages were included in *The 1928 Book of Common Prayer*.

Years A, B, and C of the Lectionary for Sundays use readings from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, respectively, with supplements from the Gospel of John. The lectionary also designates specific collects for use on Sundays, Feast Days and Holy Days.

The Lectionary for Sundays provides a focal point and cornerstone for preaching and teaching in the Episcopal Church. The lectionary also connects the Episcopal Church with other denominations. Many of the same Sunday readings are shared with Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

Personal Views

Have you ever thought about how much Scripture is read for the Daily Offices (Morning and Evening Prayer) or in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist? Reading Morning Prayer, for example, usually involves praying one or two Psalms, reading two or three passages of Scripture, and saying or singing one or two canticles in response to God's word. (Canticles are hymns

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**—*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
—Psalm 119:105
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Johann Wolfgang van Goethe, Robert A. Millikan, Robert E. Lee, Daniel Webster
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Proper 28 (BCP, p. 236)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances. I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word. Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your ordinances. I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

Psalm 119:105-112

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Often young people think the Bible is difficult to read and has little to say to them. Encourage them to explore the Bible by using the lectionary.
- Youth are curious about other faiths and denominations. Let them know that people from many other churches and faiths, including Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians, often read the same Scripture passages as Episcopalians on Sunday morning.
- **Discussion Starter:** What is your favorite Scripture verse or passage?

or chants usually from the Bible, such as The Song of Zechariah, BCP, p. 92, based on the passage from *Luke 1:68-79*.)

Likewise, the Liturgy of the Word in the Holy Eucharist usually includes readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and one of the Gospels. When we reflect on the amount of Scripture in our liturgy, we realize that the Episcopal Church devotes significant attention to the Word of God.

Through the use of the daily lectionary, the Sunday encounter with Word of God in Scripture can continue during the rest of the week. Publications and Bible study groups, such as daily devotions from *Forward Movement* and the *Bible Reading Fellowship*, are usually available to help us read Scripture in a devotional way.

How would you describe your Monday through Saturday encounter with the God through Holy Scripture? Does your church offer a weekly Bible study or small group devoted to reading, studying, and applying Scripture? Have you thought about reading Morning or Evening Prayer on a daily basis? Explore new ways to make Bible study a regular part of your life seven days a week. Paul said in *Hebrews 4:12*, "Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Q. Why do we call the Holy Scriptures the Word of God?

A. We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible.

Q. How do we understand the meaning of the Bible?

A. We understand the meaning of the Bible by the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in the true interpretation of the Scriptures.

Catechism

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 853

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

At the front of the room, hang Resource Poster No. 2 or a piece of paper with the number 19 written in gold. Make sure Bibles and Prayer Books are available for each youth if possible. As the youth enter, give them a Prayer Book and ask them to determine the date of Easter for the year they graduate from high school by using the directions on page 880 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Encourage them to work in groups.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Psalm 119:105-112* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

*Dear God and Heavenly Father—
Please help us use your Word as a
light for our lives. Show us the right
path to go on. As you already know,
O Lord, we have suffered already.
Keep us on the right path so we
don't stray from your Word. Amen.*

Sara, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from Psalms,
chapter 119, verses 105 through 112.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Ask the youth to share their findings from the Coming Together exercise.

- Was it difficult to figure out the exact date?
- What does the number 19 mean? Why is it in gold?
- What is the golden number for your graduation year?

Share with the group information about the lectionary from the Commentary. Ask them if they have ever heard the word “lectionary.” Divide into small groups and invite the youth to turn to the directions on page 888 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Ask the young people to find the Sunday gospel reading for Proper 28 in the year of their high school graduation and then locate and read the gospel in the Bible.

Next ask the youth to find the gospel reading for their birthday in the year of their high school graduation based on the directions on page 934 of the Prayer Book. Finally, look up the Scripture in the Bible and read their “birthday gospels.”

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Common threads:** Bring several bulletins and Scripture inserts from the worship service. Ask the youth to look for common threads or connections among hymns, prayers and Scripture readings.
- **Collect:** Working in small groups, write a collect to reflect the themes and ideas of the gospel for Proper 28 for this year or the year of their high school graduation. Look at other collects, including the one for Proper 28 on p. 236 of *The Book of Common Prayer*, to see what to include.
- **Icing on the cookie:** Bring in large, un-iced sugar cookies and icing in pastry tubes. Give each youth an opportunity to write the Scripture reference of their “birthday gospel” on the cookies. Invite them to “inwardly digest”

the cookies and verse citations as their snack.

Games

- **Bible quiz:** Play a Bible quiz by making up a list of statements directly related to Scripture passages in the lectionary. For example, Jesus feeds 5,000 people, *Matthew 14:13-21*. To respond to the statements, youth must state the lectionary year and the date it is closest to.

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch the clip from the movie *Monty Python's Holy Grail* about the beatitudes. Compare the movie blessings with the passage in *Matthew 5*.
- **Print:** Compare Bible translations of the gospel reading used in worship that day. Bring in several different translations that should be available from the church library or the rector. How are the translations similar or different? Is the meaning different?

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Sing or read “Book of books, our people's strength” (*The*

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session near or before Proper 28 (around November 16) so the youth can recognize Scripture readings and perhaps write a collect for the worship service.
- The word “canon” comes from the Greek word for rule or standard. In early Christian history, the word came to mean a list of religious writings that are “authoritative.” These lists were used in the early church in selecting appropriate readings for services and establishing theology. In about the fourth century, the “canonical” texts were assembled in a single volume that we call the Bible.
- We take for granted the availability of Bibles in this country. During the Cold War, visitors often smuggled Bibles to people in communist countries in the former USSR. Today, Bibles are scarce or even forbidden in some areas of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Cherish your freedom to have Bibles in many translations by reading the Bible each day this week.

Resource Poster

- The Golden Number (No. 2)

Hymnal 1982, 631).

- Learn “Holy Bible, Book Divine” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 139).
- Listen to “Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet” by Amy Grant.

Service

- **Bible distribution:** Find out about the American Bible Society, Gideon’s International, or the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Why is distributing Bibles so important? Explore ways that youth can support the efforts of these groups in the community or on a larger scale.

Sharing

- **In worship:** Talk to the worship committee about using the collect written for Proper 28 for the Expressions activity during a worship service.
- **Lectors:** Find out if youth can serve as lectors at Sunday worship. Explore the possibility of training youth as lectors.

Study

- **Apocrypha:** Find out the names of the books in the Apocrypha. What are these books called in the “Articles of Religion” (BCP, p. 868)? Look up the meaning of the word “canonical.” Are the books in the Apocrypha canonical?
- **Illustrations:** Visit the library and examine illustrations of illuminated gospels from monastic communities. Why did these people spend so much time creating these manuscripts?

- **Daily devotions:** Review and compare devotional guides for daily study of the Bible, such as *Forward Movement*, *The Bible Reading Fellowship*, and the ECY Session Leaflets. Are the Scriptures in the Session Leaflets related to a topic?

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

It is a belief in the Bible. . . which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life.

Johann Wolfgang van Goethe

I consider an intimate knowledge of the Bible an indispensable qualification of a well-educated [person].

Robert A. Millikan

In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.

Robert E. Lee

Whatever achievement of my life there is to be commended, the credit is due to my kind parents in instilling into my mind an early love of the Scriptures.

Daniel Webster

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the collect on page 236 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

Proper 28

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 236

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can youth name and locate the two types of lectionaries in *The Book of Common Prayer*? Were they able to find the Bible readings for a particular Sunday and week day? Can they find central themes in the Scripture readings for a particular day?

Advent & Lent: Seasons of Preparation

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

This session focuses on the two seasons of the Church year that call Christians to prepare and wait. Youth will be able to describe the meaning and origin of Advent and Lent. They will identify ways to observe these seasons in community and individually.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes similarities and differences of the two seasons of Advent and Lent. Key ideas are preparation and penitence. For spiritual preparation stop and listen to hear God's call for you.

Commentary

Advent and Lent are the seasons of preparation centered on the coming of Christ into the world and the end of his life on earth at the cross. Both are solemn seasons and are marked by a change in vestments and hangings of the color purple, signifying penitence and royalty. (The use of Sarum blue for Advent has become the tradition in a number of churches.)

Advent begins the Christian year and comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning coming or arrival. These four weeks are a time of waiting, love, and hope when the Church prepares for the coming of the Messiah, the Christ child born in Bethlehem, and makes ready for his second coming at the end of time.

The collects for the Sundays in Advent echo the Gospel readings and focus on preparation, expectation, and on the power of the light of

Christ in contrast to the long hours of darkness at this time of year.

Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten* referring to the lengthening of days in springtime. It is observed in the spring as a time to prepare for rebirth. The season was first named and observed in the fourth century as a period of discipline and fasting for people preparing to be baptized on Easter. Over time, it has grown into a season of penitence and fasting in making ready the observation of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The arrival of Lent leads many people to devote more time to spiritual disciplines, the giving of alms, and curtailing earthly things that separate us from God. It is customary to refrain from celebrating weddings during Lent.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, forty days before Easter, and concludes on Easter Day. The length of the season reminds the Church of the forty days Jesus spend in the wilderness being tempted. On Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on the heads of worshippers as an outward sign of repentance and mortality. Special acts of discipline and self-denial are encouraged throughout the season.

Many traditions accompany Lent—ashes, the Stations of the Cross, foot washing, and preparation for baptism. The final week of Lent is Holy Week, described by Gertrud Mueller Nelson as “the very apex of the Church year.” It is a

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**—*[John the Baptist said,] “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*
—Matthew 3:2
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Johann Wolfgang van Goethe, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jean Little
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Lent Collect, Order for Evening (BCP, p. 111)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matthew 3:1-6

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Many youth equate Lent with giving up something like candy and Advent with shopping and commercialism in general. Help the youth create a new image of these seasons.
- Be careful not to overemphasize the somberness of these seasons. Preparation implies an eagerness for the coming of something or someone special.
- **Discussion Starter:** How do you prepare your home for a special visitor? How could you do the same things spiritually?

time to recall the traumatic events in the final days of Jesus's ministry in somber and powerful ways through special liturgies, music and readings from Scripture.

Personal Views

Both Advent and Lent are times of preparation and anticipation. We should look backwards and forwards—to what has been, to what has been promised, and to what will come. We should take time to ready ourselves, letting go of those things that cloud our vision or are counterproductive. Advent and Lent are seasons for making room, cleaning out unnecessary baggage of our worldly existence to make space to let God in.

What obstacles are in our way, keeping us from a fuller relationship with God? Find time to slow down, to be quiet, and to reflect. What concerns and obligations keep us from spiritual wholeness and understanding?

The emphasis on discipline and penitence challenges us to take something on rather than give something up. Play some quiet music for meditation and then read and reflect on *Matthew 3:1-6*. Think not only of John the Baptist's message of repentance, but of his ministry as well. What was he called to do, and how did he live out this call? What are you called to do? What can you get rid of to make more room for God? In order to hear God's call, we must first stop and listen.

Let not our souls be busy inns that have no room for thee and thine, but quiet homes of prayer and praise, where thou mayest find fit company, where the needful cares of life are wisely ordered and put away, and wide sweet spaces kept for thee,

where holy thoughts pass up and down, and fervent longings match and wait thy coming.

Author unknown

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 4 at the front of the room. When youth arrive, ask them to sit on the floor in a circle and wait in silence. Suggest that they reflect on the poster that shows a road winding through the forest. Do not offer a snack at this time.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Matthew 3:1-6* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Almighty God, Father of heaven and earth, give us the inspiration to honor the holy times of your son, our savior, Jesus Christ, at his birth and death. Let us rejoice during Advent while we prepare for the coming of Christ. Let us repent during Lent when we acknowledge that Jesus sacrificed himself so that we may live. Amen.

Yuri, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3, verses 1 through 6.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

After the Scripture reading, pass out a different vegetable to every other youth. In the middle of the circle place a large empty bowl, a number of bowls half-filled with water, utensils, some paper bags, salt, pepper, oil and vinegar. Invite the youth to work in pairs, maintaining silence and taking care to prepare their ingredient for a salad.

Offer no further explanation, but observe what they do and how they work together.

After they have finished preparing the vegetables, ask them to put the ingredients in the large bowl to make a salad. Ask a volunteer to toss the vegetables with oil and vinegar.

Give each pair a word that is connected to the themes of the seasons, such as prepare, waiting, quiet, prayer, fasting, reconciliation, forgiveness, self-denial, repentance, and others. Ask each pair to write a brief prayer incorporating their word. Begin a group prayer, asking each pair to share their verse when they feel ready. After the prayer, serve the salad.

Reflect on the activity by asking the youth what they know about Advent and Lent. Use Resource Poster No. 3 to show them where these seasons fit in the Church year. Share information from the Commentary.

- What steps did we take to prepare our salad?
- How did making a salad reflect the meaning of the seasons of Advent and Lent?
- How do both of these seasons end? How did we end our activity?

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Calendars:** Make your own Advent or Lent calendars with devotionals for each day of the season. Include appropriate passages and quotes as well as suggestions of things to do that

are in keeping with the themes and Scripture of the season. Use *The Book of Common Prayer* for ideas for collects and Scriptures readings.

- **Banner:** Create a banner out of squares of cloth in shades of the seasonal colors (purple and blue). Challenge them to make a design that reflects both preparation and penitence. Carry the banner in the procession during Advent or Lent.
- **Posters:** Break up into small groups and design posters advertising Christmas or Easter, illustrating how people can prepare during the season of Advent or Lent. Use Resource Poster No. 4 for ideas.

Games

- **Journey:** Explain that the youth are going on a spiritual journey. Ask them to think about the items they will need to pack for this journey. Stand in a circle, and let one person begin “packing” by saying, “I’m going on a journey, and I’m taking (prayer, meditation, music, etc).” The next person makes the same statement, but adds an item. The last person must include every item mentioned, in the correct order.

Media

Today’s youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted materials.

- **Video:** Watch *Babette’s Feast* in which the main character puts great care and efforts into

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session before or during the seasons of Advent or Lent.
- Advent is full of rich traditions from the Jesse tree, to the empty creche and the Festival of Lessons and Carols. The Advent wreath, which is made of evergreens, is decorated with four candles—three purple and one rose one for the third Sunday of Advent—to signify that the Light of Christ is coming. On each of the four Sundays of Advent a candle is lit. Sometimes a white candle is placed in the center and lit on Christmas Eve.
- In addition to penitence, Lent focuses on the meaning and importance of baptism, both of which are emphasized in the lectionary. Other important themes for the season are reconciliation, forgiveness, self-denial and discipleship. Other religions throughout the world, such as Islam and Judaism, have similar times of reflection and penitence. The need to prepare and seek forgiveness seems to be universal to all people.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Church Calendar (No. 3)
- Taking New Paths (No. 4)

preparing an incredible celebration. Why does she do this?

- **Print:** Read an Advent or Lenten daily devotional. Ask each young person to write a brief devotion that reflects a personal view. Compile the writings into a devotional guide for the group.

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Sing or read "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 56).
- Sing together "Were You There?" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 37).
- Listen to "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" from the musical *Godspell* or "Sounds of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel.

Service

- **Help box:** Bring in a decorated box. Ask youth to fill it with ideas of thoughtful services and acts they can perform in the parish, at home, or in the community. For example: baby-sitting for free, escorting an older parishioner to church, reading to a younger sibling, or cleaning up trash on the grounds. Encourage youth to pick an idea and carry it out during the next week. After completing the service, write a sentence or two about doing the "good" deed. Hang your comments on a Giving Tree or other special place.

Sharing

- **Before Advent:** Collect greens and invite others to join you in making Advent wreaths. Or make Advent wreaths for other Sunday School classes.
- **Jesse Tree:** Sponsor a Jesse Tree service or help younger children make Jesse Tree ornaments.
- **For Lent:** The Tuesday before Lent is Shrove Tuesday, a last celebration before Lent. Investigate customs and traditions for the day. Plan a Shrove Tuesday event.

Study

- **Journal:** Keep a journal for Advent or Lent to record your thoughts about preparation and turning back to God.
- **Silence:** Locate places in *The Book of Common Prayer* rubrics that call for silence. Think about how people might use these opportunities for silence. Why are we uncomfortable being silent as a group?

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

A person should hear a little music, read a little poetry and see a fine picture every day in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful that God has implanted in the human soul.

Johann Wolfgang van Goethe

Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning. It is the lifting of a burden or the canceling of a debt.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

When I opened my eyes this morning,
The day belonged to me.
The sky was mine and the sun,
And my feet got up dancing.
The marmalade was mine and the squares of the sidewalk
And all the birds in the trees.
So I stood and I considered
Stopping the world right there,
Making today go on forever.
But I decided not to.
I let the world spin on and I went to school.
I almost did it, but then, I said to myself,
"Who knows what you might be missing tomorrow?"

Jean Little

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 111 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty and most merciful God, kindle within us the fire of love, that by its cleansing flame we may be purged of all our sins and made worthy to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lent Collect, Order for Evening
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 111

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are youth able to describe the meaning and origin of Advent and Lent? Can they identify ways to observe these seasons in community? Are youth able to list ways they can celebrate Advent and Lent individually?

Fasting: Days of Self Denial

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

This session focuses on the discipline of fasting and prayer. Youth will be able to describe fasting in relation to the Church. They will name the two major fast days and locate other appropriate days for fasting in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary relates the history of fasting and its use in the Church. Key concepts are fasting and the Benedictine rule. For spiritual preparation, be aware of the distractions of life that draw you from God.

Commentary

Fasting is primarily a penitential practice intended to strengthen the spiritual life by diminishing the attraction to food or pleasure. The intended result is the removal of any sinful desires that can draw people away from the love of God, an openness to God's call, and a renewed commitment to God. Abstinence from food was practiced among the ancient Jews during times of national and personal calamity to discipline the soul and make the person's voice heard in heaven (*// Samuel 12 and Joel 1:14*).

Jesus, John the Baptist, and Jesus's disciples practiced fasting, although it appears the disciples did so only after Jesus's death. The early Christians also practiced regular fasting, although the New Testament does not require it, and the practice appears to be more of a tradition

Anglicans generally fast during

the seasons of Lent. Other Christian churches engage in additional periods of fasting including the season of Advent. In the Church's early centuries, the Lenten fast was always associated with Easter, but originally lasted for only two days. By the fourth century two days had been stretched into forty in most places.

While the Roman Catholic Church prescribes exactly how, when, and why to fast, the Episcopal Church gives no specific directions. The Episcopal calendar appoints two days for fasting: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Both days fall in Lent, and fasting is not required.

Fasting is always accompanied by prayer as a way to nourish the spirit. Fasting is to be done in community and under spiritual direction, reflecting the Benediction rule that reflects Anglican devotional and liturgical life.

Today people fast for many reasons—political, religious, and even pathological. Therefore, it is important to discern what makes fasting particularly Christian. Alexander Schmemmann, an Eastern Orthodox theologian, suggests an answer rooted in Genesis. The Old Testament begins with “the breaking of the fast” by Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit. Christ came as the new “Adam” who begins his ministry with fasting during his wilderness temptation. Adam was tempted and ate; Christ was tempted and said no. In Adam humankind dies; in Christ all are made alive.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**—*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*
—Matthew 16:24
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Fulton J. Sheen, Jerome, Thomas Merton, Ety Hillesum
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Ash Wednesday (BCP, p. 217)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

The Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

Matthew 16:24-26

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Anorexia and bulimia, forms of self starvation, are life threatening diseases which affect millions of young women and girls. Emphasize the importance of fasting with prayer and in a community setting. Fasting is never to be used as a diet.
- In discussing or planning a group fast, be aware of special health concerns such as diabetes and hypoglycemia among your group. Remember that fasting does not have to be abstaining from food.
- **Discussion Starter:** What is one thing that you could give up that would make you a better friend, a better student, a better athlete, or a better Christian?

The passage from *Matthew* calling for the "denial of self" does not mean merely giving up something optional. The attitudes, possessions, and behaviors that prevent people from following God actually become the gods that rule in their lives. Through fasting and prayer, the community helps each person set aside gods to return to the one, true God.

Personal Views

T. S. Eliot suggests that "in order to possess what you do not possess, you must go by way of dispossession." God desires to fill us completely with his presence. Often we must let go of what we are clutching so tightly in order to have hands free to receive. What are you holding onto in your own life that prevents you from embracing what God longs to give you? Is it a hope, an expectation, a dream, an attitude?

Fasting is one way to help us turn loose of the things that keep us from God. Try fasting and prayer for a short period to help you discern the "gods" that hold sway in your life. In a culture of addiction fueled by instant gratification, practice letting go of outside demands in favor of the still small voice of God.

At communion, look at your outstretched hands as you take the host. Do you reach toward God with your whole self, are you holding something back? Consider asking other, including the youth, to join you in a period of fasting, prayer, and reflection.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy

Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Third Sunday of Advent
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 212

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

As youth arrive, hand each person an index card and a pen or pencil. Tell them to imagine that they have only a few minutes to gather everything that is valuable to them before they must flee for safety. Ask them to write down everything they would take. After a few minutes gather the cards even if youth have not completed their lists.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Matthew 16:24-26* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear Lord, we ask that you guide us in our time of fasting. Give to us the strength to keep on going, as well as the knowledge that you will see our attempts to become closer to you. Amen.

Chapin, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 16, verses 24 through 26.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*
People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Pass the cards written in the Coming Together activity back out to the group, making sure that no one has his or her own card. Ask the youth to mark with a check or highlighter pen the items on the cards that are essential for life. On a piece of newsprint list the "essential" and "non-essential" items as the youth report them. Discuss the differences between want and need.

- Are some of the valuables you listed on your card on the "non-essential" list? Do you disagree? Why?

- What do you really “need” to live?
- Which of our “valuables” keep us from doing other things?
- If you lost most of the “valuables” on your list, what would your life be like? Would you die, or just live differently?

Fasting is a way to help us rediscover the things in life that are most important. Pass out black cards and pens and ask the youth to list one thing—music, food, television, for example—that keeps them from being a better person. Agree as a group to give up these things and to pray for each other for a week.

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Journaling:** Fasting can occur at any time and does not have to involve food. Ask the youth to think about a typical day and plan an “action fast.” To help them focus on the task, encourage them to look at Resource Poster No. 4, displayed somewhere in the room. Encourage them to use concrete examples, such as, I will not make fun of “___” while he or she stands by the lockers; I will choose a book to read instead of an hour of MTV today, or I will buy a can of soup for the food bank instead of a candy bar.
- **Cornucopia:** Bring a large basket and paper, crayons, paint or markers. Ask youth to identify one food item they think is essential and draw a picture of it. On the back of the picture, ask them to write down one quality they think is essential, such as forgiveness, love, or compassion. Gather the

pictures in the basket, and look at the kinds of foods and qualities represented. How can fasting help us recognize the things that are essential?

Games

- **Obstacles:** Create and “obstacle” course that tests the youth's senses. Explain that not eating during fasting often helps people use their other senses to be aware of God's presence. Suggested stations for the course include: putting a simple puzzle together wearing a blindfold; telling the difference between pain yogurt and sour cream while holding your nose; or describing whether a piece of music is classical or rock while wearing ear plugs. Talk about how they felt using other senses. How does fasting help us feel or understand new things about ourselves?

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch the scene from *Jesus of Nazareth* where Simon of Cyrene literally carries Jesus's cross. What did he have to give up to take on the cross?
- **Print:** Cut out pictures of food from magazines. Separate them into two piles: one for food for survival, and the other, food for fun. Which pile has more pictures? Do outside forces influence our thinking about what is essential? How can fasting lessen the influence of outside forces?

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session before a penitential season or fast day, such as Ash Wednesday or Good Friday.
- Many things in our busy lives keep us from a closer relationship with God. Although we often associate fasting with Lent, Advent is also a penitential season focusing on the coming of Christ into the world. Picture yourself holding the infant Jesus. What do you need to put down in order to embrace the Christ child? A telephone receiver? A computer mouse? A golf club? Give up something this week in your life that keeps you from God.
- Fasting is not unique to our faith or our culture. Muslims, for example, fast during the season of Ramadam, and Jews often fast on the Sabbath or high holy days. People all over the world use fasting to reconnect to their spiritual roots. The need to focus thoughts by denying the senses is a universal truth found throughout history in almost every culture.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Taking New Paths (No. 4)

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Read or sing "Lord Jesus, think on me" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 641).
- Sing "O How He Loves You and Me" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 35).
- Learn and sing "One Tin Soldier" (*The Tune Book*, p.104).

Service

- **Gleaning:** Organize a parish-wide gleaning project. Gleaning was practiced as a form of caring for the poor among the Hebrew people. Farmers left behind a portion of their crop that the poor could harvest without shame. Make arrangements to go into a local field where food is grown and pick up what remains for distribution to a local food bank, shelter or pantry.

Sharing

- **Youth fast:** Plan an organized fast for all the youth in the church. Gather at the church to eat a simple dinner, and stay together overnight. Fast for breakfast and lunch, then conclude with a meal. Ask others in the congregation to join the fast at home, using the time normally spent preparing and eating a meal in prayer or working at a local food pantry.

Study

- **Fast days:** Find out more about the two fast days of the Church, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Where else is fasting mentioned in the Prayer Book?
- **Concordance:** Look up fast and fasting in a concordance. Read some of the references in the Bible. Does the Bible say God expects us to fast? Why are people fasting in the references you read?

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Self discipline never means giving up anything, for giving up is a loss. Our Lord did not ask us to give up the things of earth, but to exchange them for better things.

Fulton J. Sheen

When the stomach is full, it is easy to talk of fasting.

Jerome

It would be more sincere as well as more religious to eat a full dinner in a spirit of gratitude than to make some picayune sacrifice of part of it, with the feeling that one is suffering martyrdom.

Thomas Merton

There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then God must be dug out again.

Etty Hillesum

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 217 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ash Wednesday

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 217

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are youth able to describe fasting in relation to the Church? Can they name the differences between needs and desires? Can they name the two major fast days of the Church? Are they able to locate other days for fasting?

Celebration: The Feasts

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

The focus of this session is the major feast days of the Church. Youth will be able to name the seven Principal Feasts of the Church and identify the significance of each of the annual celebrations.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary provides a brief description of each of the seven Principal Feasts of the Church. Key terms are Ascension, Pentecost, Incarnation, and Epiphany. For spiritual preparation, contrast the ways you celebrate important days in your life and how the Church celebrates important days through the feasts.

Commentary

The Episcopal Church calendar is filled with special dates for celebrations called “feasts.” *The Book of Common Prayer* lists seven Principal Feasts to celebrate and proclaim special events. These Principal Feasts are Easter Day, Ascension Day, The Day of Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, All Saints Day, Christmas Day, and The Epiphany.

On **Easter Day** the Church bears witness to the resurrection of Christ and proclaims that three days after his crucifixion, Jesus “rose again in accordance with the Scriptures” (BCP, p. 358). Churches are illumined by the light of the Paschal candle and ring once more with acclamations of “Alleluia!”

Forty days later, the Church recalls Jesus’s ascension into heaven and the return to his heavenly throne on **Ascension Day**, a festival that evolved in the fourth century. On this occasion the Church proclaims Jesus

as the Great High Priest (*Hebrews 4:14*) who “will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead” (BCP, p. 359).

Fifty days after Easter the Church gathers to celebrate the **Feast of Pentecost** as recorded in *Acts 2:1-13*. The liturgical color for the day is red to symbolize the tongues of flame that descended above the heads of Jesus’s followers as they received the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised this “holy comforter” in *John 14:16-17*.

One of the deepest mysteries of Christian faith is remembered on **Trinity Sunday**, one week following Pentecost. On this day the Church celebrates God’s revealed identity as father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christians understand God uniquely as “one God, one Lord, in Trinity of Persons and in Unity of Being” (BCP, p. 380).

The four feasts described above are moveable. That is, they are pinned to the ancient lunar calendar, and their dates shift each year. The remaining three feasts have fixed dates.

On November 1 Christians use special hymns and prayers to celebrate **All Saints Day**. The liturgy for the day reminds the Church of the communion of saints and the ministry of the faithful down through the ages. On this occasion the Church recognizes the sainthood of all believers.

Christmas Day is another feast with a fixed date. A specific celebration of Christmas was not known in the Church until about 200 C.E. The date December 25 has been used since the fourth century as a

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Collage
 - **Key Verse**—*Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.*
—Psalm 148:13
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Susan Coolidge, Virgil, Elizabeth Barrett Browning
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—The Epiphany (BCP, p. 214)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host! Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! . . . Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven. He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 148:1-4, 11-14

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may not know the meanings of the words used for the feast days or the events they describe. Be sure to explain the definitions before using words such as "Incarnation" or "Epiphany."
- If you have youth in your group from other cultures, invite them to share stories about holidays they have observed or have heard about.
- **Discussion Starter:** Which of the seven Principal Feast days is your favorite? Why?

time for Christians to remember the birth of Jesus Christ, God made flesh, often called the "Incarnation."

The **Feast of the Epiphany** is marked on January 6 to recall the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem to worship and present gifts to the Christ child (*Matthew 2:1-12*). The Church also celebrates the spread of the gospel to all people as a "light to the nations" (*Isaiah 42:6*).

Personal Views

What are your recollections of Thanksgiving, birthdays or special occasions? Do you remember the sense of festival and excitement that surrounded these important times in your life?

For the early Church, this sense of festival and excitement surrounded the Eucharist at weekly worship and the seven Principal Feasts now celebrated on the Church calendar. In many places today, especially in the Southwest or Central America, the liturgical celebration of the Church is set in the wider context of fiesta.

Although Christmas and Easter are surrounded by secular celebrations, the other Principal Feasts of the Church usually receive little fanfare outside the Church. How would your church celebrate the feast days as a fiesta? What would you like to do that you don't do now?

The feast days were established to help Christians better understand their faith. Just as the celebration of the Eucharist evokes the memory of Christ's death and resurrection, the Feasts each embody a special remembrance. During this next year as you celebrate the various feast days, pay special attention to the Scriptures and the liturgy. Do these feast days help to strengthen your faith?

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Trinity Sunday

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 228

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Decorate the room for a party with bright colors, ribbons, balloons, snacks, and festive music. Hang Resource Poster No. 5 somewhere in the room. If possible bring a pinata filled with scripture verses or trinkets or bring fortune cookies with scripture verses inside. Allow time for everyone to share in the celebration before gathering.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Psalm 148:1-4, 11-14* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear Father—

Let us keep praising you until the day we die. Let us praise you wherever we are and whatever the time of day. No matter who we are—teens or kings—help us to praise your name. In your heavenly name, Amen.

Sara, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from Psalms, chapter 148, verses 1 through 4 and 11 through 14.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Bring in objects or pictures that suggest the themes of the Principal Feasts of the Church year. For example, Easter: a butterfly; Ascension: a balloon rising; Pentecost: a dove, fire, or wind; Trinity: a shamrock, triangle, or other three-sided item; All Saints: a saint; Christmas: a manger; Epiphany: a star or gifts.

At the front of the room make a list of the seven Principle Feast Days and a second list of dates. Divide into pairs, and give each group paper and pencil. Ask them to match the object with the appropriate feast day and the date.

Pass out *The Book of Common Prayer* to each pair and ask them to check their answers by reading about the feast day. Invite the groups to share their answers and the reasons they used.

- What do you know about these feast days?
- How do our observances of these feast days compare with celebrations we had today? What is similar or different?
- How would you add more excitement or festivity to a Feast Day?

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Festival tree:** Create a “festival tree” using a branch from a tree. Come up with at least one symbol for each of the seven Principal Feasts—use the objects from the Engaging activity to get started. Make ornaments and decorations based on each of the feasts.

- **Banners:** Make banners for each of the seven Principal Feasts of the Church. Carry them in procession during the appropriate worship services or use them to decorate an auditorium or entryway.
- **Post it:** Create a colorful bulletin board display of the seven Principal Feasts. Or make a large calendar that includes the seven feasts and other important dates for your church.

Games

- **Ask me:** Divide the youth into pairs. Assign one person as the clue giver, and the other as the answer giver. Two pairs will play at a time. Give the name of one of the seven Principal Feasts to the two clue givers. They will take turns giving out clues until the correct feast is given. The pair that comes up with the correct answer will play another round with the next pair. Use the feasts more than once if necessary; however, stipulate that clues can only be used once!

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch the movie *A Christmas Story*. Did the family's celebration and the youth's wish remind you of a Christmas you have known?
- **Print:** Look through newspapers and magazines for different ways people celebrate. How many of these could you use at church or a worship service?

WEAVINGS

- This session could be scheduled before a Principal Feast Day or at the beginning of the year. Calendars and banners made for Expressions could then be used throughout the year.
- The Church initiated feast days to celebrate with joy special events in the life of Christ and the Church. During Old Testament times, the people celebrated harvest times, the dedications of temples, military victories, as well as family events such as marriages. While the New Testament does not specifically mention feast days, traditions used in celebrations today grew out of practices in the early Church.
- Churches today are recapturing the spirit of celebration and festivity through new forms of worship, the use of dance, and a wide range of music. To celebrate feast days, some churches are using special instruments to make music more joyful. Others change normal routines, such as having the congregation process as a group into the church. What does your church do differently on feast days?

RESOURCE POSTER

- Celebrate! (No. 5)

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Sing or read "This is the hour of banquet and of song" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 316). What does the banquet refer to?
- Learn "Now the Feast" (*Gather*, GIA Publications, Inc., 537).
- Listen to "Celebrate" by Kool and the Gang or "Please Celebrate Me Home" by Kenny Loggins.

Service

- **Celebrate:** Plan a party around one of the feast days for a child-care center for under privileged children or for a senior center. Plan games that either group would enjoy and crafts they could make. Be sure that snacks are appropriate for the group you select.

Sharing

- Plan a meal or snack for your church or a group in the church for one of the feast days. For example, make foods that rise for Ascension Day. Share with the group what you have learned about that feast day.

Study

- **Colors:** Ask someone in your church to show the group the different vestments worn by the

clergy for the seven Principal Feast Days. A representative from the Altar Guild could also demonstrate the hangings used for the feast days. Find out what the colors represent.

- **In the world:** Learn more about feasts and festivals in other countries such as "Posadas" in Central America, or "The Day of the Kings" in France. (Refer to *Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations of the World Dictionary* or *Sharing Our Biblical Story*.)

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

We ring the bells and we raise
the strain,
We hang up garlands every-
where,
And bid the taper twinkle fair,
And feast and frolic—and then
we go
Back to the same old lives again
Susan Coolidge

Endure, and keep yourselves for
days of happiness.

Virgil

I praise Thee while my days go
on;
I love Thee while my days go
on:
Through dark and dearth,
through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure
lost,
I thank Thee while my days go
on.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 214 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Epiphany

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 214

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth name the seven Principal Feasts of the church? Can they identify the significance of each feast? Are they able to identify ways that celebrations enrich life in the Church?

Christmas & Easter: Celebrating the Seasons

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

The focus of this session is the seasons that follow the feast days of Christmas and Easter. Youth will be able to identify the seasons of Christmas and Easter as the days following the feast days. They will list ways the seasons can be celebrated.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary is about the seasons of Christmas and Easter that follow penitential periods of the Church year. Key ideas are Incarnation, Baptism, and Resurrection. For spiritual preparation, reflect on the scripture passage and following the example set by Jesus Christ.

Commentary

Christmas and Easter are both seasons that focus most closely on the festival days, the powerful celebrations that begin these seasons. The miraculous events which mark each season are the foundation of the Christian faith that allows all people to accept their humanity openly, but with enough humility to avoid complacency.

The season of Christmas celebrates the Incarnation of Christ, when the Son of God became flesh, in the 12 days from Christmas Day to the Epiphany. The dates of this season, unlike Easter, are fixed. Christmas owes its origin to popular Gentile feasts that were supplanted by the Church. These feasts are based on the solar year, unlike Passover and Easter that depend on the lunar calendar.

The Christian year, therefore, parallels the actual history of the spread of Christianity, first in the

preaching of the gospel to the Jews, then among the Gentiles. The seasons of the year are a reminder that the Christian faith has brought together all people, in which “there is no longer Jew and Greek, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (*Galations 3:28*)

Easter is the principal feast day in the Church calendar. Christ died on the cross for the sins of all so that each person might have new life. Easter comes after a long season of soulful preparation. Eastertide lasts from Easter Sunday to Pentecost and is, in essence, an intense extension of the Passover feast. In the fourth and fifth centuries when most baptisms occurred on Easter, Easter week was a time of instruction about Christian life and ways for the newly baptized.

Gospel readings during Easter focus on Christ's post-Resurrection appearances to his followers. These are important examples of how Christ, though transformed, is still connected with us through his human form and yet one with God through his miraculous ascension. The joy of the season is echoed in Alleluia, a word that is ever-present in Easter worship and hymns.

Personal Views

The mere mention of Christmas and Easter should inspire awe and wonderment. The stories of the birth and resurrection of Christ are familiar to many people. What else do we need to know about these stories? What more should we

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**— . . . *and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
—Philippians 2:11
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Robert Smith, C. S. Lewis, Malcolm Boyd, Athanasius
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter (BCP, p. 225)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Most younger youth are not ready developmentally to understand abstract ideas. They can, however, discuss the mystery of faith and understand that all questions may not have answers.
- Emphasize the religious aspects rather than the secular celebrations of these seasons. Help the youth channel the joy and anticipation they feel toward the birth and Resurrection of Christ.
- **Discussion Starter:** What is the first thing you think of when you hear the words Christmas and Easter? Why?

expect of ourselves? How can we be year-round Christians celebrating the coming of Christ and his ultimate resurrection from the dead in our lives?

Look closely at the passage from Paul's *Letter to the Philippians* 2: 5-11. If we are to walk with Christ and follow his example, we must first understand the mind of Christ. Paul did not condemn the wealth and affluence of the Philippians, but focused on how Christ's life and message provided the passion Paul felt in his own life. Does Christ's message give "passion" to your life?

The scripture passage begins with the words, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. . ." Such an act requires understanding both ourselves and Christ. The passage goes on to articulate some of the fundamental tenets of our faith. Much of it is difficult to comprehend from a human, finite perspective, and even harder to internalize.

We all struggle with our faith with many questions and doubt. The abstract questions are particularly difficult. How can we make our faith concrete enough to be comprehensible, yet abstract enough to remain holy? The mystery of faith is a wonderful dilemma. How can you live into the mysteries of the Christian faith?

Almighty God, whose beloved Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption: Give us courage to take up the cross and follow him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Collect of the Holy Cross
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 252

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Place symbols or words connected to the religious observations of Easter and Christmas around the room. On one wall, place a big sheet of paper with markers or crayons nearby. As the youth arrive, ask them to write down whatever comes to mind when they look at each symbol or read each word.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Philippians* 2:5-11 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

God Almighty, please help us to see the true meaning of Christmas and Easter, and help us to understand why they are important to the Church year. Help us to avoid getting caught up in all of the gifts during the holidays. Please help us to follow the example of Jesus and to see Him in everyone. Thank you for all of the wonderful gifts you have given to us and especially for Jesus, your Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Kate, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the Letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5 through 11.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Display Resource Poster No. 5 of the Fireworks. Underneath the poster write "The 12 Days of Christmas" and "The 50 Days of Easter." Divide into two groups and challenge the first group of youth to list 12 ways to celebrate the season of Christmas. The second group will describe 50 ways to celebrate the season of Easter. Remind them that they cannot use "traditional" events that occur of the Feast days themselves, but they can design new

ways to celebrate the seasons.

After a short period of time, reverse the task, asking the first group to list Easter season celebrations and the second group to list Christmas seasons celebrations. (Suggestions: always singing hymns that contain the word "Alleluia" or not using the confession during the 50 days of Easter and giving gifts to friends over the twelve days of Christmas.)

Discuss the symbols and the words youth wrote earlier and the meanings of the seasons that extend beyond the feast days. Show them the placement of the seasons in the Church year (Resource Poster, No. 1). Ask them to find out how long each season is from *The Book of Common Prayer*.

- What do we first think about when we are about to celebrate these seasons?
- Does your family or church have special traditions they observe during these seasons? Or are they ignored?
- How does the commercialization of these seasons distract us from their true meaning?
- How can our observances of Christmas and Easter make these times meaningful?

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Celebrate:** Display Resource Poster No. 5 showing the fireworks. One of the ways communities celebrate special events such as the Fourth of July is with a display of fireworks. Think about the ways you like to celebrate. What is something that could be

done on each of the twelve days of Christmas to signify this time in our lives?

- **Alleluia!:** Design a colorful message that uses the word "Alleluia" to be hung somewhere in the church. Find something from *The Book of Common Prayer* or create your own message about the joy of the season.

Games

- **Pick-up sticks:** The familiar carol, "Good King Wenselas" was written for St. Stephen's Day, December 26. In the lyrics, the king watches a poor man gathering wood. Scatter a box of toothpicks in the center of the room. Give the youth drinking straws and ask them to gather "wood" using only the straw and their breath to neatly stack the wood in their own space.
- **12 Christian ideas:** An ancient catechism used "The Twelve Days of Christmas" to teach basic information about the Bible and Christian faith. Invite the group to create its own catechism using this song. Divide into two groups. Each group uses half of the song to match the days of Christmas with a Christian concept, such as twelve drummers drumming—the twelve apostles. Let each group take turns trying to stump the other.

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session before or during the seasons of Christmas or Easter.
- The dictionary defines incarnation as the assumption of human form or nature by a divine being, such as the incarnation of God in Christ. While the term does not appear in the New Testament, the doctrine is throughout the gospels, especially in *John*.
- Many of the customs and commercialism that often distract us from the true meaning of Christmas and Easter grew out of community traditions that were initially related to religious observances. St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra, is the forerunner of Santa Claus. The giving of gifts can be traced to the gifts of the Magi to the Christ child. The use of eggs at Easter came from the symbol of the egg as new life and rebirth. As you prepare for the seasons of Christmas and Easter, look for the customs and traditions that help you rediscover the true meanings of these seasons.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Church Year (No. 1)
- Celebrate! (No. 5)

- **Video:** Watch *The Other Wise Man* based on a story by O. Henry.
- **Print:** Compare the Apostles' Creed with the Nicene Creed. What is different? What is the same? Why do we use the Nicene Creed at the Eucharist and the Apostles' Creed in daily worship?

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Read or sing "A stable lamp is lighted" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 104).
- Listen to "People Get Ready" by Rod Stewart from *Storyteller: The Complete Anthology*. What does it say about Christ's return?
- Listen to "Coming Out of the Dark" by Gloria Estefan from *Into the Light*. What message of hope is expressed in this song?

Service

- **Boxing Day:** In England, there is a custom of giving a box of food to those who work for you on Boxing Day, December 26. In the past, often there was enough food to get a family through the winter until the spring growing season. Gather food items for a shelter or food kitchen in honor of this day.

Sharing

- **Celebrate:** Examine the ways listed in the Engaging activity for celebrating the seasons of Christmas and Easter. Select an idea and carry it out by sharing it with another group or the entire parish.

Study

- **Seasonal saints:** Explore *The Book of Common Prayer* and *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* to find out other events and people we honor during the Christmas and Easter seasons.
- **Prayer book:** Look through *The Book of Common Prayer* for liturgical options for the seasons of Christmas and Easter. Many are described in the rubrics, or directions that appear in italics.
- **Dictionary:** Look up words that pertain to the Christmas and Easter seasons, such as incarnation and ascension. Rewrite the definitions so they can be easily understood by young people.

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

God expects from [people] that their Easter devotions will in some measure come up to their Easter dress.

Robert Smith

Christmas cards in general and the whole vast commercial drive called "Xmas" are one of my pet abominations; I wish they could die away and leave the Christmas feast unentangled.

C. S. Lewis

Why do we celebrate your birth but not your life? . . . Thank you, Christ, on the occasion of Christmas and always, for giving us life in the midst of death, *life, life*, with you.

Malcolm Boyd

He became like us that we might become like him.

Athanasius

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together [the prayer] on page of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 225

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Youth will be able to describe the seasons of Christmas and Easter as the days following times of penitence and fasting. They will be able to list ways the seasons can be celebrated, and name symbols and words associated with Christmas and Easter.

Epiphany & Pentecost: The Green Seasons

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

This session focuses on the two seasons associated with the color green that is used in worship and as a symbol of growth. Youth will be able to identify Epiphany as the season that proclaims Jesus as Savior of the whole World. They will describe Pentecost as the season that explores the significance of the Church as the sign of Christ's presence and ongoing activity in the world.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes the two seasons and the feasts that mark their beginnings. Key terms are Epiphany, Pentecost, and transfiguration. In the Personal Views, think about your faith during these seasons of "ordinary time."

Commentary

Each of the seasons after Epiphany (January 6 to Ash Wednesday) and Pentecost (The Day of Pentecost to the First Sunday in Advent) begins with a Principal Feast of the Church (see Session 6). They are called "green seasons" because their liturgical color is green and their emphasis is on spiritual growth.

The name Epiphany is inspired by the Greek word "epiphanos" meaning revelation or showing forth. The Sundays after the Epiphany highlight Christ's revelation as the Savior of the world, and Scripture readings from the lectionary for this season proclaim Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord for Jews and Gentiles.

The season opens with Feast of the Epiphany (January 6) marking the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem-

to honor the Christ child. The last Sunday after Epiphany celebrates Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain top where he encounters Moses and Elijah and hears the voice of God. During the season after Epiphany, Christians are called to grow in their understanding of the Baptismal Covenant while promising to "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ" (BCP, p. 305).

The season after Pentecost follows the Day of Pentecost and is the longest season of the Church year, lasting until Advent. The Day of Pentecost falls fifty days after Easter and recalls the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples after Jesus' resurrection. For a period of several months the Church hears Scripture texts that reveal the ministry of Jesus and the continuing work of all Christians on his behalf. During these weeks God's people are challenged to grow in their understanding of discipleship and the Church's mission to restore all people to unity with God" (BCP, p. 855).

While both seasons emphasize growing in faith, there are distinct differences between Epiphany and Pentecost. Epiphany concentrates on examples of God's self-revelation to people and emphasizes the unique revelation of Jesus Christ as Immanuel, or God with us, for the entire world. Pentecost stresses growth as a follower of Jesus in the "knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ" (*II Peter 3:18*).

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Calendar
 - **Key Verse**— . . . *so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*
—Philippians 1:10b-11
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—George Macdonald, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Robert Raines
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Proper 3 (BCP, p. 229)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:3-11

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Be sure to explain terms, such as transfiguration, that are unfamiliar.
- The season of Epiphany and Pentecost can seem uneventful, less exciting than other seasons of the Church year. Help youth to see how extraordinary things can happen during the ordinary times of our lives.
- **Discussion Starter:** What does the color green mean to you? Why?

Personal Views

The Roman Catholic Church calls the seasons of Epiphany and Pentecost "ordinary time." Although the season of Epiphany lasts only a few short weeks before the beginning of Lent, the season of Pentecost begins sometime around spring after the fifty days of Easter, continues through the summer, and goes well into autumn to the season of Advent.

For many of us, this "long green season" during spring, summer, and fall is truly ordinary time. The "mountaintop" experiences of Christmas and Easter give way to school, work, vacations and ordinary living in the "valleys."

The green season of Pentecost may be truly ordinary, but it provides an excellent opportunity to look for God's extraordinary work in our lives. During this time, we celebrate Jesus' transfiguration that three of his disciples (Peter, James and John) witnessed on a mountaintop. And yet, Jesus would not allow them to remain there. They left the mountaintop and returned to the valley to the hustle and bustle of every day life—ordinary time.

In the ordinary settings of the valley Jesus preached the Good News, healed the sick and taught his disciples. Ordinary time was the setting for the Lord's extraordinary work. Perhaps the seasons of Epiphany and Pentecost—the green seasons of ordinary time—can be the setting for those with the eyes and ears of faith to sense God's continued presence and work. Ordinary time may not be so ordinary after all.

Think about the ordinary times in your life when you have grown in your faith and understanding of God.

Lord God of our Fathers; God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the world about us. Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table for solace only, and not for strength; for pardon only, and not for renewal. Let the grace of this Holy Communion make us one body, one spirit in Christ, that we may worthily serve the world in his name.

Eucharistic Prayer C
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 372

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 3 of the Church calendar at the front of the room. As the youth arrive, ask each one to make a list of things they do or places they go during "ordinary time," the green seasons on the calendar. For example: go to school, read a book, and so on.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find Philippians 1:3-11 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Most merciful God, we pray for ourselves that we may grow as Christians. Help us to see Jesus, your son, in our daily lives. Also help others find their faith and love of you and the Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

—Molly, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Philippians, chapter 1, verses 3 through 11.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Ask the youth to share the lists they made during the Coming Together activity. On a wall calendar, mark with a green highlighter the days of the year that are in the "green seasons" of

Epiphany and Pentecost. Do not include the Feast Days of Epiphany, January 6, or Pentecost, fifty days after Easter Day. Discuss the meaning of the seasons with the following questions:

- What proportion of the year is designated a green season? (Divide 352 by the number of green days on the calendars.)
- Why do you think the Church chose green for these seasons?
- What kinds of things do you normally do during these months?
- Do you prefer these “ordinary times” to the more festive times of the Church year?

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Poetry:** Ask each youth to write a poem or story about what is ordinary in their daily lives, highlighting the places where they might find Jesus.
- **Letters:** Invite the youth to write a letter to a friend or relative they are in touch with only during special holidays and might forget about during the ordinary times in their lives.
- **Banner:** Make a banner for the Green Seasons emphasizing spiritual growth and maturity. Hang the banner somewhere in the church, or carry it in the processional during worship services.

Games

- **Playing together:** Plan a game day for the group or invite another group to join you. Play games the youth enjoy, such as checkers, parchessi, hearts, or solitaire.

Make sure a variety of games are available, and encourage youth to play several games with different people. Being with people you enjoy and doing ordinary things can be a way to find God.

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch together *Forest Gump*, a movie about an ordinary person who does extraordinary things. Where do you find God in this movie?
- **Print:** Use magazines to find pictures of ordinary people doing every day kinds of tasks, such as washing a car, feeding a baby, or talking to friends. Make a collage from the magazine pictures on a poster board. Display the collage as an act of prayer.

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Sing or read “Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 482). Notice how many different words the poet used to describe the Lord.
- Sing “Spirit of the Living God” (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 115).

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session before the seasons of Epiphany or Pentecost if youth plan to make banners or other symbols for display.
- While the color green is most often associated with growth and new life, the word also can mean unseasoned, not fully developed or perfected, or not properly aged. Most of us are in the “green” stages of our spiritual life. During the green seasons of ordinary time we can work on developing our faith to maturity.
- In the Scripture passage for this session Paul refers to the “harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.” During the times of the green seasons, we move from the cold and fallow ground of winter, through the sowing time of spring, the cultivation of summer, to the harvest of the fall. This a good time to contrast the growing seasons with our own spiritual growth. Seeds must be planted and nurtured before a harvest can take place. Similarly, we must cultivate our faith “for the glory and praise of God” (*Philippians 1:11*).

RESOURCE POSTER

- Church Calendar (No. 3)

■ Listen to “Home by Another Way” by James Taylor or “I Just Called to Say I Love You” by Stevie Wonder.

Service

■ **Missionaries:** The Great Commission (*Matthew 28:19*) to “make disciples of all nations” summarizes the message of Epiphany. Learn more about the work of the North American Mission Society, South American Missionary Society, and the Foreign and Domestic Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church. Find out how your group can support their work.

Sharing

■ **Finding God in Ordinary Life:** Take a walk around your church and its grounds. Where are some places where you see evidence of God’s love? Where could you express your love for God? For example, youth could clean up a storeroom, plant flowers in a barren area, or clean up the grounds after a storm.

Study

■ **Lectionary:** Look up the scripture readings in the lectionary for the seasons of Epiphany and Pentecost. Identify significant people from these readings, and write a few brief facts about each person on separate note cards. Use the cards later to play a guessing game of “Who Am I?”

■ **Epiphany stories:** Read the three traditional Bible stories associated with Epiphany: Jesus’s baptism (*Matthew 3:13-17*); the wedding at Cana (*John 2:1-11*), and the transfiguration (*Mark 9:1-8*).

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

The holy spirit of the Spring
Is working silently.
George Macdonald

Christian community . . . is a gift
of God which we cannot claim. .
. . . The more thankfully we daily
receive what is given to us, the
more surely and steadily will
fellowship increase and grow
from day to day as God pleases.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Lord, give me freedom
to rejoice in your gifts of life
and love,
to be present in all that I do,
and to praise you with all my
strength.
Robert Raines

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together Proper 3 on page 229 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.
Grant, O Lord, that the course of this
world may be peaceable governed
by your providence; and that your
Church may joyfully serve you in
confidence and serenity; through
Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Proper 3
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 229

Leader: *Let us go forth into the
world, rejoicing in the power of the
Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are youth able to describe the green seasons? Can they identify Epiphany as the time the Church proclaims Jesus as Savior of the whole world? Can the youth describe Pentecost as the season that explores Christ’s presence and ongoing activity in the world?

Saints: Recognizing Devotion

The Episcopal Church Year

Objective

The focus of this session is the Saints and those commemorated by the Church for their faith and ministry. Youth will be able to identify biblical Saints and their feast days in *The Book of Common Prayer*. They will also name others that the Church recognizes as having shown exceptional devotion to God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes the different kinds of saints recognized by the Church. Key ideas are commemoration and sainthood; a key date is All Saints Day. For spiritual preparation think about the sainthood of all believers.

Commentary

In the passage from *Colossians* Paul uses the term saint to refer to all of God's people within the Christian community at Colossae and also to suggest the intention of God to offer the fruits of the gospel to the entire Roman empire. A saint today usually falls into one of three categories: a person recognized as preeminent for holiness; a spirit of the departed in heaven; or simply a holy or godly person.

The primary theological basis for the practice of venerating or honoring the saints is found in Paul's teaching about the mystical body of Christ (*Romans 12:4-8*). The catechism (BCP, p. 862) defines the communion of saints as "the whole family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together in Christ by

sacrament, prayer, and praise."

Saints recognized by the Church are listed in the Calendar in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 19-30. All are New Testament witnesses to Christ and include the apostles, Mary and Joseph, Mary Magdalene, Paul and others mentioned in the *Book of Acts*. Other extraordinary people have been commemorated by the Church and are included in the Church calendar designated with lesser feasts.

In the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, a long and complicated procedure leads to canonizing a saint. Miracles must be witnessed and validated before a person can be honored as a saint. Final approval is given by the pope or a patriarch. In the Episcopal Church, names are submitted every three years at General Convention, a national gathering of bishops and deputies. The members of the convention vote on those people and collect written to honor those proposed for commemoration. People who are selected are given a three-year trial period and then presented to the convention a second time for permanent approval.

The book of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* provides the history, beautifully-written collects, and Scripture passages for saints commemorated by the Church. All Saints Day, celebrated on November 1, is the most significant celebration honoring all those who have gone before. At this service some parishes read the names of the "new saints" or communicants who have died in the

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Jan Moffatt
 - **Key Verse**— . . . *for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints.*
—Colossians 1:4
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Eric Hoffer, Laurence Houseman, Martin Luther King, Jr., C. S. Lewis
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—All Saints' Day (BCP, p. 245)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:3-6

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Be prepared for youth to ask about praying to saints for help and guidance. The Church teaches that saints intercede for us with their prayers even as we pray for each other.
- Be clear about the difference between saints and heroes. People who are famous, such as sports figures, may be "heroes" to their fans, but are not "heroes" of the faith.
- **Discussion Starter:** Do you know a saint?

past year.

For further study: Look through *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* to see the kind of people the Church has commemorated.

Personal Views

Saintly behavior is often an excuse for comparing ourselves unfavorably with an idea or expectation of what we think we should be instead of what God knows us to be. Most of us will never be burned at the stake for our faith as Polycarp was for refusing to curse God. However, God expects us to live our faith in daily, if less dramatic, acts of love, compassion, and courage. Think about your actions in the past week. Did you give someone an encouraging word? Did you call a friend who was in need? How were you the hand, eyes, and ears of Christ?

Saints are the best example of God's grace in action. They were often chosen for a specific task because of their limitations, strength made perfect in weakness. Has God ever called you to a task for which you were unprepared? How did you respond? Did you discover strengths that were unknown to you?

Be aware this week of all the saints in your life. See how God uses all of us in ministry and service. Who has always been available when you needed help? As a part of the communion of saints, God's people love and serve God through ministry to each other.

For in the multitude of your saints, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses, that we might rejoice in their fellowship, and run with endurance the race that is set before us; and, together with them, receive the crown of glory that never fades away.

Preface for All Saints
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 380

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 6 showing a collage of faces at the front of the room. Look through *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* or *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 19-30, and select several saints. Write the names on poster board, leaving space for more information beneath each name. On index cards, write brief descriptions of each saint. As youth enter, give them each a card or let them work in pairs. Ask them to match the description with the saint by taping the card beneath the name. (Descriptions can be found in *Lesser Feasts or Fasts* or in Holy Days Collects (BCP, p. 237 ff.)

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Colossians 1:3-6* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, thank you for those saints and martyrs who gave their lives and earthly things for the love of God. Help us remember that we are also saints for the love of God. Amen.

Sara, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from Paul's Letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, verses 3 through 6.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Go over the matches made by youth for the Coming Together activity. Ask each individual or pair to read the description under the saint's name. Briefly discuss the meaning of saint from information in the Commentary. Ask a youth to read the catechism (BCP, p. 862) about the communion of saints.

- What do you think of when you hear the word "saint"?
- According to the Church, who are saints?

- Do you think of yourself as a saint? What kind of people are depicted in the Resource Poster? Do some of them look like you?
- Would you act differently if you were a saint?

Ask the youth to select one or more saints from the Coming Together activity that they find interesting. Look up the feast day for these people in the calendar (BCP, p. 19-30). Using information from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* and *The Book of Common Prayer*, make greeting cards honoring the saints that were chosen. Identify the “saints” in your church whose works may be less visible, such as those in the Altar Guild, buildings and grounds crews, or nursery workers. Send them “saint cards” as a thank you.

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options that seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Drama:** Prepare a short play or scene about a saint selected by the group. While some youth write the script from information in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, others can design props and costumes.
- **Initial Art:** Select a favorite saint from *Lesser Feast and Fasts* or the Calendar beginning on page 19 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Working individually or in groups, draw the initials of the saint. Stylize the letters, making a picture that symbolizes the saint.
- **Departed saints:** If a cemetery is adjacent or near your church, take newsprint and crayons and do rubbings of the stones. Afterwards, ask youth to think about what kind of legacy they will leave

after they die. What epitaph would you want to be written on your tombstone?

Games

- **Best skit:** Divide the youth into teams. Give each team a book about saints, such as *Butlers Book of Saints*. Tell each team to choose a saint and act out a scene from the saint's life. After each team has performed for the others, give prizes for the most creative, the most difficult, or the funniest. Make sure that every participant is a winner.

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch the movie *The Mission*. Who is the saint in this film? Are you surprised?
- **Print:** Using comic books, newspapers, and magazine articles, explore the difference between saints and heroes. How would you define hero? Can you name some “heroes” you think should be commemorated by the Church?

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session before or near All Saints' Day November 1.
- The Episcopal Church honors those who have served God in extraordinary ways by commemorating their memory on a special day. Those selected for this honor are assigned a lesser feast day, and we remember them in prayer on that day. The Saints of the Church are all New Testament figures who were witnesses to Christ's ministry. These Saints are also remembered by prayer on a special day, and are listed in bold type in the Church calendar in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 19-39. The communion of saints includes the whole family of God, the living and the dead.
- Most of us are unfamiliar with many of the people commemorated in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. While many of these people were forced to defend their faith in fiery passion and even death, others led lives of quiet persuasion. Charles Simeon, for example, used sermons that were “unfailingly biblical and simple” to promote an evangelical movement in the Church of England (LFF, November 12). David Oakerhater, a Cheyenne warrior who became a Christian after his capture, ministered to his people by founding and operating schools. Look for the saints of faith whose everyday ministry touches the lives of everyone around them.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Friends (No. 6)

- Read or sing “The eternal gifts of Christ the King” (*The Hymnal* 1982, 233 or 234).
- Sing “Praise God for the Body” (*Songs for Celebration*, H-304).
- Listen to “Abraham, Martin, and John” about modern martyrs.

Service

- **Hero or saint?** identify a person in the news from your community or area whose life and ministry you admire. Find out how you can support this ministry with your time or through a fund raiser.

Sharing

- **Lights, camera, action:** Film the drama prepared for the Expressions activity to show at a coffee hour or to other groups in the church. If appropriate, prepare a “saintly” snack to serve.
- **Worship:** Plan an All Hallows Eve Service at your church on Halloween. The *Book of Occasional Services* may be a helpful resource.

Study

- **Research:** Find out more about saints in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. Visit the library or go on the Internet to seek more information. Many saints have incredible legends about their lives and service.

Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Many of the insights of the saints stem from [their] experience as sinners.

Eric Hoffer

A saint is one who make goodness attractive.

Laurence Houseman

We die when we refuse to stand up for that which is right. We die when we refuse to take a stand for that which is true. So we are going to stand up right here. . . letting the world know that we are determined to be free.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

. . . while Christendom is divided about the rationality, and even the lawfulness, of praying to the saints, we are all agreed about praying *with* them.

C. S. Lewis

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 245 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

All Saints' Day

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 245

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are youth able to identify biblical Saints and their feast days in *The Book of Common Prayer*? Can they name others that the Church has commemorated? Are they able to define who is part of the communion of saints?