

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

SPIRITUAL LIFE **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 form 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 Voigt 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.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

The content of this module focuses on the spiritual development of young people. Several sessions present the disciplines of prayer, worship, and a rule of life as ways of finding God. In other sessions of *Spiritual Life*, youth examine faith, mission, and ethics as these aspects of faith affect their lives. The last two sessions help younger youth explore the unique spiritual understanding of Episcopalians. Seeing themselves as Christians in relationship to God and responding to Jesus' call to live out the promise 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:
 - Prayer: Talking to God*
 - Prayer: Praying Alone*
 - Worship: Praising God*
 - Rule of Life: Living for Christ*
 - Faith & Belief: Knowing God*
 - Mission & Service: Finding God*
 - Ethics & Morals: Living as a Christian*
 - The Episcopal Way: Scripture, Tradition, Reason*

The Episcopal Way: Finding the Middle

■ **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

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.

Prayer: Talking to God

Spiritual Life

Objective

This session focuses on the many ways people address God in prayer. Youth will be able to identify the different kinds of prayer used in talking to God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes different forms of prayer outlined in the Catechism of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Key words are adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition; a key idea is prayer as response to God. For spiritual preparation, think about your own experiences of prayer.

Commentary

The Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* describes prayer as a response to God. This counters a common perception that prayer is something that originates from inclination, need, hope, or fear. Rather, prayer is God's initiative. The Bible portrays God as one who yearns to be in relationship with his people.

God created the world and all that dwells in it out of love. God established a special relationship with humans. God called his people into a covenant relationship and constantly yearns for them to be faithful so that they might know and love God completely. God's prayer throughout scripture is for the fulfillment of this covenant relationship.

Christ's life, death, and resurrection has made God's yearning for faithfulness a reality for all who respond in faith. Prayer is a faithful response to what God has already initiated.

The Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* (p. 856-857) affirms

prayer as a response to God and describes the different ways to address prayers to God. One way to remember the kinds of prayer is to think of a hand, assigning a different type of prayer to each finger. This exercise includes the following five of the seven kinds of prayer described in the Catechism:

Adoration: The thumb, used for grasping the greatness of God.

Confession: Index finger, pointing to God's forgiveness.

Thanksgiving: The tallest finger, the most important kind of prayer gives thanks to God at all times.

Intercession: Ring finger (finger of the heart), hearts going out to others in prayer.

Petition: Little finger; important, but prayer for self comes last.

The kind of prayer that is said depends on the concern or situation. The person who is praying also determines how the prayer is made. God created people in unique and wonderful ways that are reflected in their response to God. Prayer is a pilgrimage of growth in relationship with God, which we offer in response to him. Conversations with God bring us continually closer to a relationship with God.

Personal Views

For much of my life, I have assumed there was a right way and a wrong way to pray. I have always wanted to pray "correctly," but I found that my efforts were often distracted by thoughts and concerns of my busy day. I also sometimes feel as if I am being

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Prayer*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.*
—Psalm 25:4
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Mohammed, Ethel Romig Fuller, Morgan Shepard
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Fourth Sunday of Easter (BCP, p. 225)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Psalm 25:4-7

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Intercessory prayer is a good way to introduce youth to prayer. Praying for others is often easier than other forms of prayer.
- Avoid extending individual fingers during the Engaging exercise, especially the middle finger. Inappropriate associations may distract the discussion.
- **Discussion Starter:** What kind of prayers do most people say? Which kinds of prayer would you consider using?

presumptuous to ask God for something when it is convenient for me, rather than having been disciplined about prayer all along.

But what I have discovered through the example of others and through my own awakening, is that God is always glad to have us “check in” with him. He wants us to love him and stay in relationship with him; God never shuns our attempts to express ourselves to him. This was freeing for me. I realized I didn’t have to use a special language or kneel on a bare floor. Any prayer at any moment is considered acceptable and joyous to God. I can pray while brushing my teeth, watching a flock of geese fly by, playing sports, laughing with friends, or staring at the ceiling late at night.

I also have found that God doesn’t mind if I share my less-than-charitable thoughts. If I find myself feeling jealous or insecure, I find that God is my best confidant and gives me courage to find something worthy to think about. If I have been hurt by another person, God knows what that’s like. If I have offended someone else, I realize through prayer that the only way for me to move beyond my selfishness is to ask for forgiveness.

There is no right or wrong way to pray. We have to trust God enough to be ourselves and discover the joy of knowing we are loved just as we are. When do you talk to God? How do you hear God? Do you have a special place where you talk to God?

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Collect at the Prayers, No. 5
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 395

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

As the youth arrive, ask them to draw an outline of their hands with a marker on a sheet of newsprint or posterboard displayed in the room. Decorate the hand prints with rings, bracelets, or whatever is the current fashion.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Psalm 25:4-7* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear Lord, thank you for listening when I pray. I sometimes pray for myself before I pray for others, or I ask for things I don't really need. But no matter how or what I pray for, you always give me your full attention. Help me open my eyes and ears to hear your answer. Help me to be patient when I forget that you may not answer right away. Thank you, Lord, for being there when I need to talk to you. Amen.

Emily, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Psalms, chapter 25, verses 4 through 7.*

(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. 1 showing a person praying. Using the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 856-857, ask the youth to write a definition of prayer in their own words. Then ask them to list the different kinds of prayer from the Catechism. Be sure they know the definition of each kind of prayer.

Illustrate a method of remembering different kinds of prayers by using the exercise in the Commentary. Ask the youth to each hold up a hand; label the fingers that are associated with the kinds of prayer. If the youth used different words in writing their definition of prayer, discuss which kind of prayer should be correlated to each finger.

In small groups or as a whole, write an example of each kind of prayer using definitions from the Commentary or those written by the youth. A prayer for the thumb—adoration—might be: “Oh God, you are so good to us, and we love you.” A prayer for the fourth finger—intercession—could be: “Please God, remember our friend who couldn’t be with us today.” Share the prayers written for each kind of prayer.

- Which kind of prayer do you use most often?
- Is there a kind of prayer that makes you uncomfortable?

During the coming week, encourage the youth to say each of the five kinds of prayer at least once. Remind them that they don’t have to use “church” words.

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

- **Shadows:** Using an overhead projector, a flashlight, or a lamp, cast hand shadows on a wall to illustrate different postures of prayer. What would adoration look like? How would you show confession? Using poster board and markers, trace the outline of each posture, and fill in the details of each tracing.
- **Collects:** Discuss the form of prayer that is most commonly used in the liturgy called the “collect.” The collect (pronounced with the stress on the first syllable, as in “collar”) is a collection of thoughts put into a particular form for prayer. Most of the collects in *The Book of Common Prayer* are written with the following pattern:

1. An address, a name or descriptive title for God or Jesus, such as “Almighty and everliving God”; 2. A qualification based on the name or title, such as “who has given us life and freedom”; 3. A petition or request, such as “help us to have fun together”; 4. A closing which typically mentions Jesus as the one through whom we pray, such as “in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.” Write a collect for your group using this format. Work in small groups or individually.

- **In my own words:** Write the Lord’s Prayer in your own words. Look at each phrase as a group, or assign different phrases to individuals. Select words that you use in normal conversations to express your thoughts and feelings. How are the different types of prayer expressed in the Lord’s Prayer?

Games

Postures: The traditional posture for prayer is kneeling, holding palms together, and bowing the head with eyes closed. Invite the youth to use their body without words to express a thought, feeling, or emotion. Write words naming emotions on slips of paper. Ask the youth to select a slip and then act out the emotion without speaking. The rest of the group will guess which emotion is being expressed.

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

- One of the principal kinds of prayer listed in the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* is oblation. We rarely hear this word outside of church. It is defined as the act of making a religious offering, such as the bread and wine at the Eucharist. Another definition is an offering of ourselves in devotion. What could you offer to God this week as part of your devotion?
- The Catechism defines prayer as a response to God “by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” Too often we limit the meaning of prayer to words formally addressed to God. Think back through your day at the times you prayed. For example, the hug you gave a child on the way to school, or the encouragement you gave a spouse on the way to work. Be aware of the different ways you respond to God through your interactions with others.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Prayer (No. 1)

- **Video:** Watch a scene from the movie *Oh, God* where the main character talks to God.
- **Print:** Look through local sections of newspapers to find one issue to pray for as a group. Pray for the issue or the people involved each day for a week.

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 "Take my life and let it be" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 707).
- Sing together "Just a Little Talk With Jesus" in (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 83).
- Listen to "God Shuffled His Feet" by the Crash Test Dummies.

Service

- **Vigil:** Conduct a prayer vigil at the site of a local tragedy such as a fatal car accident. Offer prayers for the family members of those who died. Leave flowers or a cross as a memorial and as a symbol of faith in God.

Sharing

- **Prayer Quilt:** Invite the congregation to write prayer requests on different colored squares of construction paper. Stitch the squares together with yarn to make a prayer quilt. Working with the clergy and worship committee, write a Prayers of the People incorporating the prayer quilt for use on a Sunday. Afterward, hang the quilt in a central location as a reminder that the youth are praying for the parish.

Study

- **Prayer in the Bible:** Read the prayers of people in the Old Testament, such as Abraham in *Genesis 20*; Moses in *Deuteronomy 9*; Daniel in *Daniel 9*; and Jonah in *Jonah 2* and *4*.
- **Jesus prays:** Read the prayer that Jesus prayed for his disciples in *John 17*, just before he was arrested and tried by the high priest. List the different parts of the prayer. How would you summarize this prayer?

Voices

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

Rewards for prayers said by people assembled together are twice those said at home.
Mohammed

If radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody
From night—and toss it over a continent or sea;
If the petalled white notes of a violin
Are blown across the mountains or the city's din;
If songs, like crimson roses, are culled from thin blue air—
Why should mortals wonder if God hears prayer?
Ethel Romig Fuller

Perhaps I ain't relijus,
But when I say a prayer,
I sort er feel inside er me
That God is always there.
Morgan Shepard

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 225 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.*

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

Are youth able to identify the different kinds of prayer? Can they name new ways to pray in their own lives?

Prayer: Praying Alone

Spiritual Life

Objective

The focus of this session is the power of silence as prayer. Youth will be able to list times to pray alone and discuss the benefits of silent prayer.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes how individual prayer deepens a person's relationship with God. Key ideas are spirituality, silence, and reflection. For spiritual preparation, think about the discipline of prayer in your own life.

Commentary

In *Psalms 62* the author talks about the reality that faith is an expression of an individual's relationship with God. Being alone with God is the place to encounter the deepest sense of his love: "For God alone, my soul in silence waits."

Old Testament leaders and prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, were called away from their normal lives to be alone with God and receive God's message through silent prayer. Jesus often left the crowds to be by himself with God. There are many people of faith who spent long periods of time alone to pray, including Anthony, Benedict of Nursia, Augustine of Hippo, and Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. Praying alone is a way to know God intimately, as one to whom "all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 323)

Praying alone is different from the experience of Sunday morning corporate worship. In corporate worship, people gather to hear and

say the prayers together, to share common concerns and thanksgivings, to sing, and to rejoice. During worship, the congregation greets one another in peace, and goes forth sharing God's love.

Praying alone is the practice of being present with God. Even as each person is unique in personality, prayers are also unique and distinct. God wants the individual response of each person.

Techniques of praying and different methods of focusing can shape prayer life. These ways of praying can change throughout life as people grow and change spiritually.

While it may be helpful to study some of the methods of praying alone, the most important step is to set aside space to spend time with God. By opening up to God in prayer, people can discover more about themselves and others.

Personal Views

Praying alone is not always easy. In fact, it is probably harder than any other discipline. We usually find ourselves too distracted to be silent long enough to hear God. We sometimes rationalize that we should spend time doing something "productive" rather than being by ourselves doing "nothing." Sometimes we judge ourselves on how well we listen to God. If we are not rewarded with instant insight, we think we have failed. Finally, we find it scary to be alone with God. God may ask us to do something we would rather not do.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Alone with God*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.*
—Psalm 62:5
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—St. Francis de Sales, John Dunne, James Montgomery
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—The Collect at the Prayers, No. 2 (BCP, p. 394)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

Psalm 62:5-7

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Encourage youth to use their own words to address God.
- Not being heard is a major concern for many youth. Let them know that God is always ready to listen.
- If you try contemplative prayer with the group, use a brief reflection. Younger youth rarely can sit in silence for long periods of time.
- Encourage youth to get permission before burning candles at home. Discuss fire safety rules.
- **Discussion Starter:** How many of your waking hours are spent in silence with no music, voices, or other distractions? Have you ever been somewhere where there is total silence?

Do you judge your prayer life? God forgives us when we are distracted. Do you forgive yourself? Has God ever called you to do something that you didn't want to do? What was your response?

Even with the uncertainties about praying alone, Christians are called to be in a relationship with God. The more we turn to God in prayer, the more we begin to discover our own particular ways of opening up and sharing ourselves with him. The more we pray, the more we look forward to being with God. Eventually we begin to rely on the time spent with God to strengthened us in our dealings with the rest of the world.

Where do you pray to God in silence? Do you use a certain technique to help you block the distractions of the day? How does God give you strength?

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Quiet Confidence
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 1 of a woman praying at the front of the room. Before youth arrive, set out a candle for each person. Play a tape of contemplative music, such as songs from the Taize community (see the Music section). As youth enter, invite them to light a candle and sit quietly.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Psalm 62:5-7* in their Bibles. Keep the candles burning, and leave the music on.

Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Lord, watch over me all the days of my life and fill them with joy. When evil comes into my life, give me the strength to turn away. When temptation blinds me, help me to see. And when hate enters the depths of my heart, help me to find love. So I ask you dear God, lift me up when I fall and keep me forever in the beauty of this life and the next to come. Amen.

Shannon, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Psalms, chapter 62, verses 5 through 7.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

After reading the scripture passage, blow out the candles and turn off the music.

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Using stickers, glitter, glue, sequins, sheets of beeswax, wicks, and other materials available at craft stores, invite each youth to make a candle for use in a personal prayer place. Make the candles yourselves out of the beeswax, or decorate candles that were purchased. Talk about how people talk to God when they are alone.

- Do you find a place to be quiet or do you pray whenever you think about it?
- Have you thought about setting aside time to pray to God alone?
- Would certain kinds of music help you think about God?

Invite the youth to find a comfortable position on the floor or in chairs. Play the Taize or other contemplative music for a few minutes. Ask the youth to try to put distracting thoughts aside and think about being with God. End with a prayer after about five minutes.

- What happened during the silent time?
- What were some thoughts or prayers that came to mind?
- Was it easy to talk to God during the silent time?
- Could you use your candle in a special place at home to pray to God in silence?

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

- **Candle holder:** Make a candle holder out of clay for the candle made during the Engaging exercise. Decorate it with the materials used for the candles.
- **Building an altar:** Think about the things you would place a prayer altar. We bring unique offerings to God in our prayers that reflect the gifts God has given us. What symbols would you place on a prayer altar in your room? Examples might be a baseball glove, sheet music, or a photograph. Make a list of the offerings on your altar; share them with the group if you are comfortable doing so.
- **I'm busy now:** Write a response for an answering machine that God might hear if he called you. For example, I can't talk right now because my favorite soap is on, or I'm playing a video game. Think about the activities that keep you from spending time with God.

Games

- **Listening:** Sit or stand in a circle. Start a conversation with one person, who then turns and

continues it with the next person. For example, I saw Tom walking down the street with Mary, and then they. . . If the group isn't listening, they will be unable to continue the story. What happens if we never stop talking long enough to listen to one another?

- **Copycat:** Stand in a line, one person in front of another. Ask the person at the front of the line to get in a comfortable position, and then to breathe very deliberately. The others mimic the body posture of the person standing in front of them. Then mirror their breathing. When the group is in sync, is it quiet or noisy? How can posture and breathing help us talk to 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 all or parts of *Never Cry Wolf* to see how the scientist copes with being alone.
- **Print:** Bring in several books with poems for meditation or examine the *Book of Psalms*. Find a line of poetry or part of a *Psalms* that would help focus your personal prayer time.

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

- The dictionary defines silence as the absence of sound or noise. In our culture, silence is not highly valued. Radios or boom boxes fill the air with music. In the city, the sounds of traffic are almost impossible to escape. In the summer, lawn mowers and tractors drone, and at all times of the year we hear the voices of people outside or inside our homes. It's often difficult to find a time to be alone with God in silence. How would you solve this dilemma?
- The Gospels writers often describe Jesus going off to be alone to pray. One of the most poignant stories, appearing in the first three Gospels, takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his arrest and trial. Much to his distress, his closest friends can not stay awake to pray with him during this terrifying time. Most of us can identify with these friends. Even though our hearts may be intent on being with God, we nod to sleep or think about what we need to do or what we should have done. Our most difficult task is to be in the present, the place where God awaits us.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Prayer (No. 1)

- Sing a round from *The Hymnal 1982* such as “Dona nobis pacem” (712) or “Shalom, my friends” (714).
- Sing a song from the Taize community, such as “O Lord, Hear My Prayer” (*Gather*, GIA Publications, Inc., 410).
- Listen to “Down on My Knees” by Susan Ashton on *Wakened by the Wind*, a song about seeking forgiveness.

Service

- **Prayer for others:** Select a local service organization that is youth oriented, such as Mothers (or Students) Against Drunk Driving (MADD or SADD). Decide to pray in silence for those who have died, those who are in trouble, and for their families. Do this for a month or a season of the church year. Find particular ways that your class can do volunteer work for this organization as a group and as individuals.

Sharing

- **Prayer wall:** Make a prayer wall out of butcher paper, and hang it some place in your church. Identify it as a place for prayers, and decorate it by drawing bricks or stones. Encourage members of the congregation to write prayer requests on the wall by making an entry on one of the bricks or stones. After several weeks, move the “wall” into your room. Pray for the people on the wall.

Study

- **Art:** Examine books of classical art at a library for pictures of people praying to God. How is God depicted? What position does the person usually take? Are most kneeling or standing?
- **The Lord's Prayer:** Find the Lord's Prayer in *Matthew 6:9-13* in at least three different translations of the Bible. Compare the words in each to the prayers in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364. Which translation speaks to who you are? Why?

Voices

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

[They] pray well who are so absorbed with God that [they] do not know [they] are praying.
St. Francis de Sales

A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of tomorrow's dangers, a straw under my knees, a noise in my ear, a light in my eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera in my brain, troubles me in my prayer.
John Dunne

Prayer is the burden of a sigh
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.
James Montgomery

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the collect on page 394 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.
Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*The Collect at the Prayers, No. 2
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 394*

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 list times to pray alone? Can they discuss the benefits of praying alone? Can they describe a place they can go to find God?

Worship: Praising God

Spiritual Life

Objective

The focus of this session is the purpose of worshipping God. Youth will be able to express the importance of worshipping with others, offering prayers and thanksgiving to God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes worship as the fulfillment of God's purpose. Key words and phrases are liturgy and the community of faith; a key idea is worshipping by taking faith into the world. For spiritual preparation think about the meaning you find in worship individually and in your church.

Commentary

Worship in the Bible is described as the essence of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional expression of a person towards God. Initially in the Old Testament, worship was offered more often as an individual act than a community event. Community worship centered around great feasts such as Passover. Later, during the exile in Babylon, scholars believe that Jews formed synagogues as places for study and worship. Worship became an important synagogue function, with services held on the Sabbath.

In the New Testament Church, worship consisted of prayers, singing, preaching or teaching, and observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

Worship is the focus of Jesus' remark to the Samaritan woman in *John 4:24*. She is concerned about the proper place to worship God. Jesus changes the emphasis from the proper location of worship to its

essential characteristics. Here and throughout John's gospel, Jesus announces that he is the revelation of God in flesh—the Truth—and that he will replace the Jerusalem temple as a place of worship. God's spirit enables people to worship Christ, the revealed truth of God, wherever they are.

Worshipping in spirit and in truth does not mean that Christian worship is a purely individual and internal act. The New Testament Church that produced John's gospel also worshipped in community with hymns, psalms, and sacraments.

The Book of Common Prayer provides liturgies and resources for people to worship God in spirit and in truth, individually and in community every day of the week. Its contents reflect centuries of tradition, enabling God's people not only to offer praise and thanksgiving, but also to renew their faith and go forth to serve God in the world wherever they are called.

Personal Views

To many young people, worship is boring. It means a lot of sitting around, standing up, singing dreary music, listening to long sermons, and parading in front of people you either don't know or don't really want to be with. Most young people come to church because their parents insist they be there. Even churches that put more emphasis on "accessible music" and "youth-oriented liturgies" still have problems trying to capture the interest of young people. Is worship

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Praising God*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*
—John 4:24
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—C. S. Lewis, Thomas Carlyle, Honore de Balzac, James Whitcomb Riley
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Venite (BCP, p. 82)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

“ . . . But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

John 4:23-24

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- When playing the game, be aware of anyone who is being left out or ignored. Seek to involve everyone in a positive way.
- The opposite of praise is criticism. Too often we are critical of young people when we should find ways to praise them. Everyone responds to praise!
- **Discussion Starter:** How can you continue to worship God during the week when you are not in a church?

meaningful to you? What makes it meaningful?

Many adults believe that the right youth pastor or the right Sunday school teacher will address the issue of boredom. But maybe the point isn't so much to make the liturgy more entertaining to young people as it is to be humble and mindful of God's desire that all his children worship him "in spirit and truth." In other words, the liturgy should express the hopes and prayers of all ages and acknowledge the challenges and gifts of Christians of every age.

Look through the liturgy for the Eucharist service. Which parts address concerns of young people? Which parts address your own needs?

Church isn't a school pep rally, but it can be a place that affirms the role of each person to bring a spirit of unity and joy to the worship of God.

Grant, Lord God, to all who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, that, as we have put away the old life of sin, so we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For all Baptized Christians
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 252-253

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 2 of an abstract rendering of a worship service. Or write the word "Worship" in bold letters on a poster or chalkboard. Set out paper, colored markers, or crayons. As youth enter, invite them to draw or illustrate a symbol that represents the idea of worship. Display the results.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *John 4:23-24* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, help us find ways to worship you by caring for each other and our fellow creatures. Help us remember that we can worship you anytime and at any place. Show us how to reach out to others to fulfill your reason for creating us. Amen.

Ellie, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verses 23 through 24.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Give everyone a chance to finish the drawing exercise described in Coming Together. Share the symbols each person designed and describe their meanings.

Choose two people to be recorders. Give one a stack of yellow slips and the other, green slips. Without revealing how the words will be used, brainstorm positive adjectives that describe people, such as awesome, cool, beautiful, or handsome. The recorders alternate putting the responses on yellow and green slips. Put all the green words in one bowl and the yellow words in another.

On a piece of newsprint, write in green "God is . . ." on one side, and in yellow "I am . . ." on the other. Take turns pulling words out of the bowls and taping them under the appropriate category.

- Do you ever use those words to describe God? Which words do you use?
- Do you those words to describe yourself? Do you think God, who loves each person unconditionally, would use those words to describe you?

- When and how do we use these words in worship?

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

- **Song of praise:** Write a poem, a hymn of thanksgiving, or a rap song about God using the words from the Engaging exercise. Share your ideas with the group.
- **Worship hats:** Bring in enough painter's hats, available at paint and hardware stores, for each person in the group. Decorate them with symbols of worship using fabric pens. Visit the worship space in your church for symbol ideas, or come up with your own.
- **Journaling:** Write a personal meditation on how you feel when you are praised, how you feel when you are criticized, and how you feel when you are ignored. How do you think God feels when praised, criticized, or ignored?

Games

- **Positive vibes:** Tape or pin a blank sheet of paper to everyone's back. Circulate around the room writing one positive attribute for each person in the group. Use pencils or pens on heavy paper so marks do not bleed through onto clothing. When everyone has finished, take off your paper and look at the words written there. Talk about the words people wrote to describe others. If you are comfortable doing so, tell each other why you chose a particular attribute.

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:** Look at movies that show different forms of worship. For example, watch a clip from the movie *Sister Act* when the choir is singing in the church. Or show the scene in *Dances with Wolves* when Kevin Costner is dancing in joy. Does worship occur only in churches?
- **Print:** Look through *The Book of Common Prayer* and explore different ways to worship: Morning Prayer, Sunday Eucharist, and special services. How do you worship God?

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 "When in our music God is glorified" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 420).
- Sing together "Expression of Life" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 53), a song of praise to God.
- Listen to "Have I Told You Lately" by Rod Stewart on *Vagabond Heart*. When is the last time you told God you loved him?

WEAVINGS

- The Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* defines community or corporate worship as uniting "ourselves with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God's Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments" (p. 857). Think about each of these parts of community worship. Which one means the most to you?
- Worship varies within our communities and cultures. In the Episcopal Church, some congregations use contemporary music and informal settings while others use incense in more traditional backdrops. Orthodox churches often have no pews, and people stand throughout services. Quakers sit in silence to await God's message. In some churches, joy so fills the people that they sway or dance. God created us in different ways so that our worship expresses our uniqueness and individuality.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Worshipping Together (No. 2)

Service

- **Ecumenical worship:** Work on a local ecumenical worship service in your community. Different denominations often offer joint services during Lent, on Good Friday, or other special times of the year. Find out how the group can participate by helping with publicity, serving as ushers, or helping with child care.

Sharing

- **Worshipping together:** Plan a worship service for another group in the parish. Wear the painter's hats, say the poem, or sing the rap song created for the Expressions activity.

Study

- **Worship in song:** Look at the section in *The Hymnal 1982* on p. 372 to 433 entitled "Praise to God." Read the hymns to find out how many different ways the writers have found to praise God. Which is your favorite hymn?
- **Concordance:** Look up the word "worship" in a Bible concordance. Read several entries from both the Old and New Testaments. How is God described in each? Is there a difference in how God is approached?

- **Stained glass:** Visit a church that has a number of stained glass windows—including your own church. Find the different ways artists have chosen to praise God through the images in the stained glass. Look for symbols of worship and praise in the windows.

Voices

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

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment. . . . The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be.

C. S. Lewis

Wonder is the basis of Worship.

Thomas Carlyle

For the Christian who loves God, worship is the daily bread of patience.

Honore de Balzac

It hain't no use to grumble and complain
It's jest as easy to rejoice;
When God sorts out the weather
and sends the rain,
Why rain's my choice.

James Whitcomb Riley

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the *venite* on page 82 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the caverns of the earth, and the heights of the hills are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands have molded the dry land. Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, and 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. Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

Venite
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 82

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 express the importance of worshipping with others, offering prayers and thanksgivings to God?

Rule of Life: Living for Christ

Spiritual Life

Objective

This session focuses on rules that help Christians deepen their faith in God. Youth will be able to define at least one rule that will support their belief in God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes the role of rules in the Christian life. A key idea is a personal rule of life; key people are the Apostle Paul and the congregation of the early church in Corinth. For spiritual preparation, think about the role of rules in your life and the disciplines you use to help you on your faith journey.

Commentary

Paul's *Second Letter to the Corinthians* is inspired by many issues raised in the context of his stormy relationship with the congregation he had started. One of the issues Paul addresses is his concern over the Corinthians' commitment to "living in the faith." Are they living in Christ or merely going through the motions? Are their lives organized around worship, prayer, and service to Christ, or have they abandoned their spiritual disciplines? Paul's view is that their faith is in peril and it is time to test themselves.

Paul believes that God is dealing with the Corinthians in powerful ways that reach into their personal rule of life, the way they practice God's presence in their daily living. The congregation prefers to point out Paul's own shortcomings. In *II Corinthians 13:5-9*, he challenges the members to examine themselves closely and to seek the wholeness that comes from listening to God

in prayer, study, and worship.

Throughout the centuries Christians have taken seriously Paul's encouragement to construct a personal rule of life that leads to self-examination, listening, and celebration of God's presence. Some individuals and Christian communities have rules that call for set times for private and community prayer and worship. Other people have followed less organized methods for these activities.

The Episcopal Church embraces many ways and resources for all ages to set aside time to honor and worship God personally and in community.

A rule of life in the Christian tradition establishes ways to worship God privately and publicly and outlines an understanding of how people will live in community. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to be faithful in self-examination in order to grow closer to God and to live out their new-found faith in Jesus Christ in every area of life.

Personal Views

When I was a teenager, I thought of living by a "rule" was something horrifying, like being forced to clean my room. During that part of my life only people in control made rules, and I was definitely not in control.

Young people often feel that they lack any personal authority. Parents, teachers, and even other peers seem to set the rules. Youth tend to either follow along or rebel, and are accepted or rejected by the choices they make.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Following Christ*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith.*
—II Corinthians 13:5a
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Basil Hume, Thomas á Kempis, William Wordsworth
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer of Self-Dedication (BCP, p. 832-833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed. But we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become perfect.

II Corinthians 13:5-9

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- There are times to “stay in the lines” and other times when it is more appropriate to move outside of the lines, or rules. Youth may need guidance in recognizing the difference. Which situations demand either following or changing the rules?
- Youth are in the midst of defining who are. They are not always able to make and keep rules for themselves.
- **Discussion Starter:** What is one rule you have made for yourself? What is a rule you could make and keep in your relationship with God?

One of the most important aspects of this lesson is understanding that in Christ we all have personal authority, even when we feel powerless or under another's control. In Christ, we are all acceptable and our lives are made holy and good. We can live knowing that the missteps we make are redeemable in Christ Jesus. This gives adults and young people alike the freedom to dream outside of the constrictions of our own roles.

Our personal prayer and worship life can be freedom and authority for us, as can life as part of a community that respects and nurtures us. A rule of life—a simple way to live—can give us the strength to forgive others and to go beyond drudgery to imagination.

Whatever stage of life we are in, we can feel whole and complete, strengthened by Christ. What rules discipline your worship of God? How do rules help us live in community?

Q. What is our duty to God?

- A. Our duty is to believe and trust in God;
- I. To love and obey God and to bring others to know him;
 - II. To put nothing in the place of God;
 - III. To show God respect in thought, word, and deed;
 - IV. And to set aside regular times for worship, prayer, and the study of God's ways.

Catechism

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 847

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

At the top of a piece of newsprint or a chalkboard write “Rules I hate the most.” As youth enter, ask them to make an entry on the paper or board. Each person can make more than one entry.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *II Corinthians 13:5-9* in their Bibles. Select a

lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, let us have a closer relationship with you. Help us to keep up our faith. Give us respect for ourselves and for others. Help us know that we are all equal in this world, and to live as if we are equal to others. Give us the strength to make this a rule for all of life. Amen.

Kristin, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 5 through 9.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Discuss the importance of rules in each person's life.

- Were any of the rules that you hate listed more than once?
- Why do you hate rules, especially those you wrote down?
- What would life be like at school or in your house if there were no rules? Talk about how rules can make life better. Describe a situation that might take place if all the rules youth hated were abolished. Ask the youth to think about rules they have devised to make life easier.

- Have you set rules at home for younger siblings?
- Do you set rules for yourself?
- Do you have stricter requirements for yourself than your parents, teachers, or coaches?
- Do you have rules about who can be your friend?

Individually or as a group, come up with rules the youth might choose for themselves. On newsprint under the heading “Rules I Can Live With,” list rules youth are willing to live by.

- Do any of the rules relate to your relationship with God? What rule might bring you closer to God?

- How many of the rules are about the way we treat each other? How did Jesus say we should treat our neighbors?

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:** Write a poem that has a certain set of rules, such as a haiku or limerick. Choose any topic. Talk about how the rules limit the way you express your ideas. Why does this kind of poetry use these constrictions? What do the limits force you to do? Where is there freedom of choice?
- **Golden Rule:** Read the Golden Rule in *Mark 12:31*. Write a golden rule based on the scripture for your group. Write the rule in the center of a piece of posterboard and illustrate it with pictures or poetry.

Games

- **TEGWOR:** Or, The Excellent Game With Our Rules. Make a game board on a piece of heavy cardboard marked off into six sections. Number the spaces one through six. Make up six things you must do when you land on a section after tossing one die. Be as creative as possible. For example, on one space the person must run around the room three times, or someone must whistle a tune after eating three saltines. One of the six spaces can be set aside for a “self expression.” When landing on that space, the person must show

some talent, such as wiggling ears or rolling a tongue. The game ends when everyone has had a chance to play.

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 scenes from the movie based on the book *Mattilda* about a young girl whose parents have no rules. Who makes the rules at their house?
- **Print:** Bring in one or more cookbooks. Find a recipe the youth would like to make. Look at the list of ingredients and the instructions for putting them together. Which directions could be changed? Which ingredients are necessary and which could be substituted? Ask everyone to write down a different version of the same recipe. If possible, make your version sometime during the week. Did your version work? Share the results with the group or bring in a sample for others to try.

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 “God be in my head” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 694).
- Sing together “Footsteps of Jesus” (*The Baptist Hymnal*, 483) about following Christ.

WEAVINGS

- In many ways, rules are like boundaries. A boundary is defined in the dictionary as something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent. Rules set up boundaries that provide safety and even freedom. Within the safety of boundaries, we are free to explore new ideas and experiences.
- Rules provide the discipline that society and individuals need in order to function. Traffic laws enable many people to get from one place to another at the same time. Without these laws, no one could guarantee a safe trip to any destination. Rules can provide the same structure for individuals. Faith journeys can't go very far if we do not “set aside regular times for worship, prayer, and the study of God's ways” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 847).

- Listen to “Authority Song” by John Mellencamp on the *Uh Huh* CD. How did you feel when he sang the words “I fight authority, authority, I always will”?

Service

- **Safety first:** Design and post safety rules for the church playground after getting permission from proper authorities. Using the rules, teach a class on safety for younger children who use the playground.
- **Crosswalk:** Spend a week with a crossing guard in your neighborhood. Find out about the rules that govern safety in crosswalks and how rules are enforced.

Sharing

- **Playing TEGWOR:** Play “the excellent game with our rules” with another group at church. Encourage an adult group to set aside their inhibitions and join the fun.

Study

- **Interview:** Talk to someone who lives in a convent or monastery about rules they must live by. Find out what it is like to have your life ordered by community rules.
- **Benedictines:** Read the Benedictine rules for life. Which rules do you find applicable?

- **Parliamentarian rules:** From the library or community center get a list of rules that govern public meetings for your city, county, or state. Are any rules unnecessary? Would you add any rules? Why are the rules so complicated?

Voices

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

How important it is not to treat people equally nor attempt to mould them into one set pattern. The Rule [of St. Benedict] demands that [people] be seen as individuals, each precious in the sight of God.

Basil Hume

My [child,] resolve to do the will of others rather than your own. Always choose to possess less rather than more.

Always take the lowest place, and regard yourself as less than others.

Desire and pray always that God’s will may be perfectly fulfilled in you.

A [person] who observes these rules should come to enjoy peace and tranquillity of soul.

Thomas á Kempis

A few strong instincts, and a few plain rules.

William Wordsworth

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 832-833 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*A Prayer of Self-Dedication
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832-833*

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 role of rules in their lives? Can they list reasons rules are necessary? Can youth define one rule that will strengthen their belief in God?

Faith & Belief: Knowing God

Spiritual Life

Objective

This session focuses on the relationship between faith and belief in God. Youth will be able to explain how faith helps them to know God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes the concept of knowing a God who initiates relationships and is accessible to everyone. The key idea is a relationship with God that comes from the heart; a key person is the prophet Jeremiah. For spiritual preparation think about the different ways you have come to know God.

Commentary

During a tumultuous time when Jerusalem's political and religious leaders ruled God's people with oppression, the prophet Jeremiah delivered a series of sermons against the city's rulers. He warned them that their neglect of God's law would lead to exile in a foreign land for the entire population.

As the exile neared, the prophet caught a hopeful vision of a new and enduring relationship with God not bound by books of law but written deep in the hearts of God's people. God will initiate this new relationship despite Israel's sin and disobedience.

In Jeremiah's time, knowing God meant recognizing God's presence and action not only in the sweep of historical events but in everyday life. Knowing God was to be the chief focus of all God's people and the motivation for every act. It was beyond intellectual knowledge: it was the gift of a profound awareness and faith that God was present and at work in every area of life.

In a time of storm and stress, God promised through the prophet that this unique knowledge would be a gift to everyone regardless of age and social position. God was giving Israel a new covenant.

The Church proclaims that God's new covenant was given through Jesus Christ. The laws that structured faith were fulfilled by Jesus and replaced by the gospel.

The Baptismal Covenant (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 304-305) announces that Christ is found in all people and that each person can know God through faith in Christ and in the activity of the community. It stands in a long line of biblical promises that God is nearby, approachable, and knowable by all people, no matter what their age or status in life.

For further study: Read *The Spiritual Life of Children* by Robert Coles.

Personal Views

I have found God best through relationships. I find that the generosity and affection of others helps me to know my creator. Several times in my life when I felt alone or abandoned, I experienced God in the kindness of someone who came to my rescue and listened to my needs. I felt like God sent an angel, a person to intervene on my behalf. These people are not God for me, but they help me to appreciate a living, present God who cares at all times.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Knowing God*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; . . .*
Jeremiah 31:34a
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—William Osler, Rufus Jones, Phillips Brooks, Dag Hammarskjöld
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Before Worship (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Everything and anything that a young person says about God must be listened to. This can be a sensitive subject for many youth because they do not want to be ridiculed or teased by their peers. At the same time, they have a need to share and compare their experiences with others.
- **Discussion Starter:** Describe an experience in or out of church when you felt God's presence.

Our youth need a sense that someone is with them, advocating for them and interceding on their behalf. Through my own experiences of finding God's presence in others, I have been better able to reach out to others. I know that God needs me to make Christ real to those around me.

Where do you find God? Do you find God in other people? Is prayer and meditation a way to find God?

Each day we have the opportunity to help others feel God's presence through us. A kind word or an affirmative remark may make a difference in someone's life. Look for ways this week to help others find God through you.

Pour into our hearts, O God, the Holy Spirit's gift of love, that we, clasping each the other's hand, may share the joy of friendship, human and divine, and . . . draw many to your community of love; through Jesus Christ the Righteous, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Collect for Aelred
Lesser Feasts and Fasts, January 12

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 3 of a photograph of a young person reading. On a table, scatter paper, pens or pencils, a Bible, and *The Book of Common Prayer*. As youth enter, ask them to think of as many words or phrases to complete the sentence, "God is . . ." Record the responses on paper or a chalkboard. Encourage them to look in books for inspiration, but ask them to write in their own words.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Jeremiah 31:31-34* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God,

Please know that I believe in you and have faith in you. I know you for myself instead of just having been told about you. Help me find you every day. Amen.

Nicole, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 31 through 34.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Share the information written during the Coming Together exercise.

- Are you surprised at some of the statements?
- How many statements had information about God?
- How many were about knowing God personally? What is the difference? Play the game "Don't Hang Up."

Bring in two telephones that are not hooked up. Pair off, and take turns talking to God. Assign one youth to be God, while the other person is him- or herself. Those representing themselves can have a conversation with God, asking God any question that comes to mind. The single rule is that the youth playing God cannot hang up until the other person ends the conversation. The game is over when each person has had the opportunity to talk to God or be God.

Discuss the game and how it felt to be God for another person.

- How well do you need to know someone to have a conversation?
- Do you ever just talk to God?
- Where do you feel God's presence? Do you find God at church? Through another person? In nature?
- How did it feel to play the role of God? How could your friends feel God's presence through something you do?
- When is it dangerous to play God in someone's life?

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:** Give each person paper and a pen to describe a moment when he or she has experienced the presence of God. Before starting, share some examples to help them understand how we find God. For example, the birth of a child, seeing a sunset or rainbow, or through the kindness of another person.
- **Finding God through art:** Paint a picture of God by blending colors, using abstract ideas, or creating images based on classic art. Or, depict a moment or a place where you have experienced God.

Games

- **Fill it up:** Fill a bucket with tennis or ping-pong balls and place it in the center of the room. Ask one person to begin emptying the bucket by picking up the balls one at a time and rolling or throwing them away. The rest of the group chases the balls and tries to keep the bucket full. Set a time limit for the person emptying the bucket and give everyone a chance to be in the middle. How is reaching out to others to show them God's presence like this game?

Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experienc-

es vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch all or part of the movie *Phenomenon*, that shows how a transforming moment in the main character's life when he realizes that he is in God's presence. How are lives changed by a close encounter with God?
- **Print:** Look through teen magazines to find information about a popular young actor. List all the things the group finds about this person. Does knowing this information mean you actually know the person? What is the difference between knowing about someone and really knowing them?

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 listen to a recording of "Amazing Grace" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 671).
- Sing "Make Me a Blessing" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 158) about letting others see Jesus in our lives.
- Listen to "Screen Door" by Rich Mullins on *Pictures in the Sky*. How do you show your faith? Is it through what you do or how you live?

WEAVINGS

- This session differentiates between knowing about God and knowing God in a personal relationship. The Nicene Creed (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 358-359) contains a community statement of belief about who God is. Faith comes when the words of the creed come from our hearts as well as our minds. The next time you say the creed, go beyond the words of belief to reflect on your faith relationship with God.
- One of the reasons we have difficulty finding God in the midst of our busy days is because we are either consumed by worries about the future or regrets about the past. The words present and presence come from the same Latin root. The first definition of presence is the fact or condition of being present. To be in God's presence we must turn loose of the past and future and live in the present.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Getting to Know God (No. 3)

Service

- **Learning about others:** Write to a youth group in a congregation from another country, perhaps a place with which your church or diocese has a relationship. Ask them to share with you how they experience God. What is their picture of God?

Sharing

- **Art show:** Host an art show for your church. Ask members of the entire church school to draw pictures of God. Display the pictures in a place that is central to the community of the church. If the church you corresponded with for the Service project responds, include pictures of God drawn by their youth group.

Study

- **Icons:** Look in a book of icons or a history of iconography for images of God. Compare images of God from different cultures and time periods. What is an icon? How do icons represent God? What do the images say about people's relationship to God?
- **Concordance:** Look up in a Bible concordance the New Testament references for the word "covenant." Compare its usage in these references to the scripture passage in *Jeremiah*. How did God write a covenant in the hearts of God's people?

- **Creed:** Read the Nicene Creed (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 358-359). Write down every fact it includes about God. How can you use these facts to know God better?

Voices

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

Nothing in life is more wonderful than faith—the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible.

William Osler

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

Rufus Jones

Behind everything stands God . . . do not avoid, but seek, the great, deep, simple things of faith.

Phillips Brooks

We act in faith, and miracles occur.

Dag Hammarskjöld

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 833 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Before Worship

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

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 differentiate between knowing about God and knowing God? Can they imagine an experience of being in God's presence? Can youth explain how faith helps them know God better?

Mission & Service: Finding God

Spiritual Life

Objective

The focus of this session is Christ's call to lives of mission and service. Youth will be able to name several ways they can be of service to God as individuals and as a group.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes common misconceptions about mission work and defines mission work as a response to God's love. Key ideas are "homegrown" missions and service to God beginning at home. For spiritual preparation think about your own call to service and how you can help youth discover their own calls to service.

Commentary

The topic of mission and service often brings to mind the role of Christian missionaries in the Church. They are often depicted as pious people who head out to unknown territories, preaching the gospel and surviving great hardships. The history of mission work is glorious, but it also alludes to complicated situations that are not as luminous.

Sometimes in the past, well-meaning missionaries tried to fashion the people they served into copies of themselves, dressing them in wool clothes in Africa or encouraging people to leave their cultures behind in order to become Christians. Misunderstanding is a common problem when people try to serve God in other cultures.

The most effective missions are usually those that are homegrown, carried out by people in their own communities and cultures. The Episcopal Church is called the Domestic

and Foreign Missionary Society partly because the baptismal covenant calls people to be missionaries wherever they are.

Many of the things people do in their own community can be considered missionary work. They are acting on behalf of God in the service of others. Because everyone who is baptized promises to "seek and serve Christ in all persons," they are all missionaries.

Young people often picture missionaries as people who leave home and family. However, there is mission and service to be done right in their own homes. Community service means punishment for inappropriate behavior to some youth; the task of this lesson will be to redefine service as an activity that responds to God's love.

The scripture passage captures Jesus's instructions to seventy disciples who were sent out to prepare the people for his coming. Jesus tells them that people are waiting for the message they are bringing. They are not only to spread the message that the reign of God is near, but also to cure the sick. Like those sent by Jesus, service is not an obligation but a response to the love God has shown to all people.

Personal Views

Many people feel inadequate when the subject of mission and missionaries is brought up. They feel that missionaries are more pious, more conscientious, and more self-sacrificing than they could ever be. Many parishes have

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Sharing the Feast*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*[Jesus] said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*
—Luke 10:2
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Kahlil Gibran, Horace Mann, Albert Schweitzer, Dag Hammarskjöld
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For Social Service (BCP, p. 260)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Luke 10:1-9

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Service and mission work demands adult supervision and the cooperation of the parish leadership. Whatever you undertake (as a group or individuals), include parents, clergy, and leadership in the planning process.
- If youth suggest mission work that is inappropriate because of safety or other issues, guide them in another direction. Youth may lose interest if their ideas are met with negative responses.
- **Discussion Starter:** Where does God most need people to do mission work?

a relationship with a foreign missionary who occasionally sends letters updating the community and asking for money to continue the ministry.

Although this understanding of mission is useful, it doesn't seem real to young people. To make mission work real, we must face the critical issues in our towns and communities, issues that may have been neglected for a long time. It means paying attention to people who are often overlooked. It might even mean mission work among the youth of your community who need the support of a caring Christian community.

Serving God in our own communities, in loving response to what God has done for us, means paying attention to the pain of others. This is both an opportunity and a challenge to adult leaders.

How do you return God's love through mission and service? How can you help youth answer Christ's call to be "laborers into his harvest"?

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Poor and the Neglected
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 826

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Fold construction paper in half and print on the outside "Passport." On the inside, print the name of your city, town, or community. Seal the edge with tape. At the front of

the room, place a globe or an atlas of the world. Nearby, hang Resource Poster No. 4 of young people of all ages working together. As youth enter, give them each a passport, but ask them not to break the seal.

Explain that they have been appointed missionaries to serve God somewhere in the world. Invite them to look through the atlas or spin the globe to find the place they think God needs missionaries.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Luke 10:1-9* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God,

Help us to be better aware of the problems others face. There are many people who need your help. Help us to be thankful for whatever service we can do, and help us to be strong when others need us. Show us how to reveal your love in all we do. Help us to be better helpers. Amen.

Ariel, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, verses 1 through 9.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Discuss the places the youth identified for the Coming Together activity.

- Why did you choose this place?
- What are some of the needs in this area?
- What could you do to serve God there?

Ask the youth to open their passports to see where God needs their help. Discuss the needs in your community or city.

- How can you be missionaries without leaving your home?

- What are some of the needs of people in your community?
- Where can people go for help?
Photocopy a map of your community or spread out a street map of your city. Find the location of your church and mark it with a cross. Identify and mark as many places as possible within a short range of the church where mission work is being done. Use a phone book to help you find places where people can get help.

Identify one or more places where youth would like to get involved. Discuss how the group can put their words into action by becoming involved in a specific mission project.

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

- **Sponge stamps:** Bring in household sponges, scissors, markers, and poster paint. Select one of the places identified during the Engaging activity, and design a small stamp for it. Draw the design with markers on the sponge and then cut it out with scissors. Dip the sponge in the paint, and stamp each passport with your symbol.
- **Letters:** Get the name of a missionary serving in a foreign country who has a relationship with your church or diocese. Write individual or group letters to this person, describing mission work being done by the youth of your church. Ask this person to tell the group about the mission work he or she does. Include this person in intercessory prayers.

Games

- **Pack your bags:** Give the youth a list of items they might need for missions work, such as a Bible, *The Book of Common Prayer*, food, or money. Invite them to go on a scavenger hunt for these items in the church. Hide the items with clues that lead them from one location to another. Other items for the list might be play money, toilet paper, a cup, cleaning products, and household tools. When they return, discuss why a missionary might need the things on the list. Return items after the hunt is over!

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 all or part of *Newsies*, a movie about the 1899 newspaper boys strike. How do the boys help each other?
- **Print:** Using the maps from the Engaging activity as guides, draw a map of your community on a posterboard. Mark the location of your church with a cross. Hang the poster in a prominent place at your church, and nearby put a sheet of paper with numbers. Ask parishioners to write down the places they help do mission work on the paper, and then mark the location on the map with the appropriate number.

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of

WEAVINGS

- The word mission originally meant the act or instance of sending. Today the word is used to describe a kind of worshipping community or a ministry commissioned by a religious organization to spread its faith and carry on humanitarian work. We also use the word when referring to a body of persons sent to perform a service. The definition is not limited to far-flung enterprises, but includes any ministry or performance of service done for others.
- Two of the earliest missionaries in the Church were Paul and Barnabas. Together they spread the good news throughout the Mediterranean area. At the same time, Peter stayed in Jerusalem to work with the young church there. Although we don't think of Peter as a missionary in the same way as Paul, his work was clearly a service to God and others. According to legend, other disciples went to different parts of the world: Thomas went to India, James to Spain, and Joseph of Arimathea to England.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Working as One (No. 4)

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 “All who love and serve your city” (*The Hymnal* 1982, 570).
- Sing together “Here I Am Lord” (*Gather*, GIA Publications, 492).
- Listen to “I Am a Servant” by Larry Norman on the CD *In Another Land*. What do the lyrics say we are called to do?

Service

- **Prayer scrolls:** Write a group prayer for healing. Look in *The Book of Common Prayer* for ideas. Copy the prayer on individual sheets of paper, roll them like a scroll, and tie with bright ribbon. Take the scrolls to a nursing home or hospital to be shared with the patients.

Sharing

- **Serving God by helping others:** Find a way to be of service in your parish. Volunteer to help babysit, set up a coffee hour, clean up after a parish event, or help in the office. Find an activity for each person in the group to complete by an agreed upon deadline.

Study

- **Missionary:** If possible, invite a missionary to speak to the group.

- **History:** Look through *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* for stories about missionaries and how they did their work.
- **Learning from others:** Ask members of the parish who volunteer for a local service organization such as Meals on Wheels or a literacy program to share their experiences with the group. Use the map from the Print exercise to identify people who do mission work in the community.

Voices

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

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

Kahlil Gibran

Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves.

Horace Mann

What the world lacks most today is [people] who occupy themselves with the needs of others. In this unselfish labor a blessing falls on both the helper and the helped.

Albert Schweitzer

You have not done enough, you've never done enough, so long as you have something more to contribute.

Dag Hammarskjöld

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 260 in *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his Name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

For Social Service
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 260

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 name ways they can serve God as individuals and as a group? Can they describe mission activities that occur in their own communities? Are youth able to relate God's love to mission work?

Ethics & Morals: Living as a Christian

Spiritual Life

Objective

The focus of the session is Christ's call to love others, even those who may be enemies. Youth will be able to discuss the ethical and moral dilemmas of living the Christian life.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary recounts the message of love Jesus repeatedly taught to his disciples. Key ideas are the two greatest commandments to love God and neighbor and the expectation of Christians to reach out to those who are difficult to love. For spiritual preparation think about the role of God's love in your interaction with others.

Commentary

In the gospels, Jesus never minced words or beat around the bush. His words were often harsh and hard for people to hear. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," he says in *Matthew*. That's a bold statement of how people are expected to live with each other in community.

Jesus calls his followers to love everyone, not just those who are easy to love. Jesus asks, "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?" Jesus has a way of making people stop and think, calling them to act just the opposite of the way they want to act.

The double commandments of love your neighbor as yourself and love God with all your heart figure prominently in *Matthew's* gospel. The commandments deal with relationships in the community

and with God. Love is the driving force in both. Jesus calls people to go a step further in following the commandments to love those they are angry with or those they find difficult to love.

Jesus establishes the basis for making ethical and moral decisions on the love felt toward others in the community. It may be easier to 'get even' or avoid confrontation and conflicts with others. But when love is the foundation for actions, the natural consequence is a Christian response grounded in love.

The last phrase in the scripture passage seems, at first, to be beyond the reach of even the most devout Christian. Christ says, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Being perfect refers to the expectation that Christians will love all people as God loves them.

Personal Views

Making decisions plays a key role in our lives. Some decisions are as trivial as what to wear or which fast food restaurant to eat at. Other decisions involving careers, jobs, sports, and dating are very important for youth. Youth are learning how their decisions have implications not only for themselves, but for others in the community.

How do they act when someone walking down the crowded halls in school purposefully bumps into them and knocks their books on the floor, scattering papers? Or how do they act when they are teased for

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*The Light of Christ*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .*
Matthew 5:44
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Mark Twain, G. D. Lichtenberg, Robert Louis Stevenson, Madame de Stael
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For our Enemies (BCP, p. 816)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. . . . You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matthew 5:17-20; 43-48

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may be uncomfortable talking about love. Help them get past the "Hollywood" emotion to the biblical meaning.
- Some youth may feel that morals and ethics are adult topics. Help them discover the role of both in their lives.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you treated someone with kindness after they were mean to you?

not joining the crowd when they don't agree?

For youth today, learning from experiences of dealing with others who disagree with or who confront them is a challenge. The foundation of how they deal with decisions in life is made in seemingly small and trivial encounters at school, home, or at play.

Youth are also being confronted with choices that have serious consequences. Questions of authority arise. Choices between right or wrong are not as clear as when they were younger. They are pulled in many directions: family, school, friends. How do they learn which choices have the best Christian outcomes?

Jesus says love of God and love of neighbor are primary concerns when making choices. What role do these two factors play in your decision making?

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 216

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Write the word "Love" on newsprint taped to a wall or a chalkboard, or hang a blank posterboard under Resource Poster No. 5, that shows a sculpture of the word "Love." As youth arrive, ask them to write on the paper or board things that they love. Encourage them to include both trivial and significant items.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Matthew 5:17-20; 43-48* 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 help us make right and sensible decisions as we go about our everyday life. Bless those people who hurt us. Help us to be comfortable talking about you to our friends. When others hurt us, help us to remember that you want us to love our enemies as much as we love our friends. Amen.

Cayce, Grade 6

Lector: *A reading from Matthew, chapter 5, verses 17 through 20, and 43 through 48.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Discuss the items youth wrote on the paper or board. Talk about their meanings of love.

- What does it mean to love somebody?
- What is the difference between romantic love and the way you feel toward your family and friends?
- Other than people, what do you love? Why?

Write a definition for love based on the discussion and the scripture passage.

Use a real-life situation to put the definition to use. Describe a scenario where there is no clear right or wrong. For example, on the way home from school, you witness a classmate being harassed. You need to get home to babysit so mom can get to work. If she is late again, she may lose her job. Do you stop and help this person or run home?

Discuss the dilemma and the solution the group feels is best.

- Are you faced with decisions where there are no right or wrong choices? What do you do?

- What role does love play in these situations?
- Where can you get help making decisions that have neither clear answers or consequences?

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

- **Bumper stickers:** Bring in contact paper and markers that will write on a shiny surface. Cut the paper into strips the size of bumper stickers. Finish the phrase “I luv . . .” on the paper. Compare the endings. How many chose people? Is it sometimes easier to love things instead of people?
- **Role play:** Make name tags to go around the neck that say “Peer Counselor.” Assign one or more youth to be the peer counselors to facilitate a dispute between two people. Divide into pairs, and come up with a dispute you or your friends may have had. Present your case to the peer counselor, who must devise a solution to which both sides can agree. Let everyone have an opportunity to be the peer counselor.
- **New look:** Read the story of the Good Samaritan in *Luke 10:25-37*. Rewrite the story to reflect contemporary language and lifestyle. If you have time, turn the story into a play.

Games

- **Forgiveness line:** Divide into two groups and line up. The first people in each line should be facing each other. Like the way

sports teams meet after a game, the people in the lines walk toward each other, allowing every person in one line to meet every person in the other line. As they meet, both say “I forgive you.” After greeting everyone in the other line, greet everyone in your line. Afterward, talk about the experience. Did you feel differently about some people in the group after this exercise?

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:** Tape a contemporary sitcom on television such as *Home Improvement*, *Friends*, or *The Simpsons* that portrays a moral dilemma. Show all or part of the comedy and discuss it.
- **Print:** Bring in the local sections from the newspaper for the preceding week. Ask the youth to find stories about ethical dilemmas being faced in their communities. For example, a story about someone breaking the law or a decision before a governing body. Is there always a clear-cut right answer?

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

- The word moral is defined as the principles of right and wrong in behavior. It can also be the expression or teaching of a conception of right behavior. The term ethic has similar meanings: the discipline dealing with what is good and bad or with moral duty and obligation. Both terms are closely related to the laws described by Jesus in the first part of the scripture passage. He goes one step further, however, to add the dimension of love in moral and ethical decisions.
- We face moral and ethical dilemmas everyday as individuals, as parents, as a Church, and as a nation. Sometimes we disagree with the moral direction others are moving in. Too often we get so caught up in a debate and our sense of being right that we forget to insert the teachings that Christ gave us. The next time you disagree with another person one-on-one in a discussion at a church meeting or in a political debate, stop long enough to look at your opponent with love and forgiveness. Is the person more important that the issue?

RESOURCE POSTER

- Love (No. 5)

- Sing or read “God is Love, and where true love is” (*The Hymnal* 1982, 577).
- Learn a new song called “Ubi Caritas” (*Gather*, GIA Publications, 301) which means “live in charity and steadfast love.”
- Listen to “What’s Love Got to Do With It” by Tina Turner. How would you answer her question?

Service

- **Political views:** Political candidates and government officials must make moral and ethical choices every day. Find out about a particular candidate who holds values similar to yours. Seek ways to support his or her efforts.

Sharing

- **Hat trick:** Put the names of all the youth in a hat. Ask each youth to draw a name, but not to reveal it to anyone. Every Sunday for one month, the youth will do nice things for the person whose name they have drawn. For example, they might pray for them, leave a short, positive note in their chair, or serve a snack to them. At the end of the month talk about doing kindnesses that aren’t reciprocated.

Study

- **Bible study:** Look at moral dilemmas presented in the Old Testament. For example, read about Joseph and his brother in *Genesis 37* and *42*, or the friendship of Jonathan and David beginning in *1 Samuel 19*.
- **Ethical dilemma:** Find out more about Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the choices he made in Germany before and during World War II. Why was he imprisoned? Could he have chosen an easier route to escape a certain death?

Voices

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

Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.

Mark Twain

There is simply no other way of worshipping God than doing your duty and acting according to the rules of reason.

D. Lichtenberg

If your morals make you dreary, depend upon it they are wrong.

Robert Louis Stevenson

The voice of conscience is so delicate that it is easy to stifle it; but it is also clear that it is impossible to mistake it.

Madame de Stael

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 816 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O God, the Father of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For our Enemies
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 816

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 discuss the ethical and moral dilemmas of living the Christian life? Can they relate Christ’s admonition to love God and each other to moral decisions? Can youth define love from a Christian perspective?

The Episcopal Way: Scripture, Tradition, Reason

Spiritual Life

Objective

The focus of this session is the three tenets of the Episcopal Church. Youth will be able to give examples of how scripture, tradition, and reason work together in Episcopal belief.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary describes the three main parts of the foundation of Anglican faith. Key words are scripture, tradition, and reason; a key idea is Anglican identity. For spiritual preparation, think about how scripture, tradition, and reason come together in your faith experience.

Commentary

Like a three-legged stool, the Holy Scriptures, the historical traditions of the universal Church, and the human faculties of reason and intellect support the tenets of the Episcopal Church.

Scripture is the record of God acting in history. It is the primary source of all that is known about God. Through God's interactions with the people of Israel in the Old Testament, it is clear that God continually reaches out to people seeking faithfulness and relationship. Through God's only son, Jesus Christ, God has redeemed humankind from sin resulting in eternal life for believers.

Over many centuries, the Church has continued to reveal the teachings of God. The many traditions, such as worship, doctrine, and church customs, have been passed down since the days of the early Church. What has gone before in the Church is important to Christians today. Knowing what the early

Church did and how it responded to different issues is a way to evaluate the effectiveness of the Church today.

The Episcopal Church places a high premium on the human ability to reason intellectually especially in corporate church life. God has given humankind the ability to search scripture and seek understanding. For example, even Peter, a founder of the Church, said there were many things difficult to understand in Paul's writings (*II Peter 3:15-18*). God's word is a living word to be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested to discover what God has done and is doing for his people today (Proper 28, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 236).

The foundation of Anglican identity rests upon the interplay of scripture, tradition, and reason. Each of these shed light on the Christian life. The tension and harmony among the three facets gives Episcopalians their unique identity among Protestant faiths.

Personal Views

For an automobile to work, it must have at least three primary parts: an engine and drive train, a body with wheels, and a system that allows us to maneuver the car. In a sense, scripture, tradition, and reason function in the Church like these three primary parts of a car.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*The Episcopal Way*, by Amanda Gearey
 - **Key Verse**—*Then [Jesus] began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*
—Luke 4:21
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Franz Schubert, Josh Billings, T. S. Eliot, Blaise Pascal
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For the Future of the Human Race (BCP, p. 828)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:16-21

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Be sure youth understand the three parts of Episcopal theology: scripture refers to the Bible, reason is intellectual understanding, and tradition is the way we live out our faith.
- This session is only an introduction to Episcopal theology. For those who wish to explore more, refer them to written resources.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you worked with others on a project? How well did you work together?

Scripture is the engine and drive train which enables Christian lives to move forward. We're all on a Christian journey. We're growing with Jesus every day, every week, every year. It is our understanding of scripture that enables us to grow in our relationship with God.

Without the power plant of the engine in the car, the car simply won't move. Without scripture to rev up our understanding of God, our spiritual lives go nowhere.

The body enables the engine to perform its appointed purpose, like the body of the Church. A powerful engine sitting on blocks has no real purpose. A person may know the Bible inside and out. But without the body of the Church to help us fulfill God's intentions for us in scripture, we can go nowhere. People in the Church are the body of Christ that enables the engine to do what it is supposed to do. Without the Church, the body of Christ, there is no vehicle with which the spiritual journey can continue.

To steer the car, we have intellect and reason to move our spiritual life in the right direction. Just as we use the gas pedal, brake, and steering column to get around in a car, we use reason to evaluate choices and decisions in our lives. God has endowed us with reason beyond that of any being. God wants us to use this ability to serve others in the world.

Without fuel, however, the car cannot go anywhere. Similarly, without the spiritual energy of people, the Church cannot move. Through prayer and worship we give life to the Church. During this week, think how scripture, tradition, and reason impact your faith. What role does each play in your own faith? Are each equally important?

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together

in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 16

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 232-233

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 6 of the abstract depiction of unity. Bring in ribbon, leather strips (available at craft stores), or yarn to weave friendship bracelets. Most youth know how to braid simple bracelets from three strands. If possible, also bring in small beads to weave into the bracelets.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Luke 4:16-21* in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God,

Help us turn to scripture, tradition, and reason to guide us in knowing you better. Give us the insight to seek wisdom from all three. Remind us that to stay in harmony with you we must be in harmony with each other. In your name we pray, amen.

Nancy, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Luke, chapter 4, verses 16 through 22.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Continue to work on the bracelets. As they weave, ask the youth what happens when one strand goes slack or the others are too tight. Describe the three "strands" of Episcopal theology—scripture, tradition, and reason. Refer to the artist's rendering of the same idea in Resource Poster No. 6.

Pass out prayer books or church bulletins to each youth. Working in pairs, identify sections of a worship service that can be labeled scripture, tradition, or reason. The first part of the Holy Eucharist service, for example, is called “The Word of God” and relates to scripture. The sermon engages our reason to think about issues. The hymns that we sing are part of our tradition.

Youth could also look through *The Hymnal 1982* for examples of the three strands of Episcopal theology. Where do the hymns about saints fall?

- Was it difficult to find examples of the three strands?
- Were you surprised to learn that reason is part of Episcopal faith?

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

- **Miter:** Draw a bishop's miter on a piece of paper. The miter is a tall, pointed hat that looks triangular from the front. Draw or paint symbols representing scripture, tradition, and reason on the miter. Compare symbols designed by different youth.
- **Rewrite a collect:** Read Proper 28 on p. 236 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Rewrite it using contemporary language. Share it with the clergy for possible use in a worship service.
- **Three-legged stool:** Bring in dowels cut in three-inch lengths, heavy cardboard, and fast-setting glue. Working individually or in small groups, make a three-

legged stool from the cardboard and dowels. Label each leg with one of the three strands of Episcopal thought—scripture, tradition, and reason. Label the cardboard top, “The Church.” If there is time, decorate the stools. What happens if two of the legs are too close? Can you have a two-legged stool? Display the stools somewhere in the church.

Games

- **Puzzling:** Make several photocopies of a picture of your church, a Bible, or another Christian symbol. Glue them to sheets of cardboard, and cut them into three different pieces, making each puzzle slightly different. Mix up the pieces and distribute them to the youth. Assemble all the puzzles by comparing pieces. The game is over when all the puzzles are put back together. Would it have been easier if the pictures had been different? After two pieces came together, was it easier to find the third?

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:** In the movie *Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey*, watch the scene in which the two dogs and a cat together face the untamed wilderness of a national forest. Note how each of the three are very different, and how they must work together to find their way home.

WEAVINGS

- Richard Hooker, the Episcopal theologian whose feast day in the Church is November 3, is often credited with defining Anglican belief in terms of scripture, tradition, and reason. His books, written during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, reveal him to be a man of moderate, patient, and serene character. He apparently was as comfortable serving as a rural clergyman as being named Master of the Temple in London, the famous church noted for the lawyers who made up the congregation.
- The emphasis on human reason, a gift from God, is important to our faith. However, reason must always be used in concert with the other two building blocks of scripture and tradition. When all three are in harmony, God fills our souls like a beautiful symphony.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Three as One (No. 6)

- **Print:** Look through the Sunday comic section for examples of conflicts over a change in tradition. Note particularly comic strips featuring teen characters.

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 "God is working his purpose out" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 534).
- Look up the words of all the verses of the children's song "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 218). Can you find parts that relate to scripture, tradition, and reason?
- Listen to Whitney Houston sing "Jesus Loves Me" on the soundtrack of the movie *The Bodyguard*.

Service

- **Bookmarks:** Design a bookmark with examples or symbols of scripture, tradition, and reason. Take them to a nursing home or hospital for distribution, or give them to people you visit.

Sharing

- **Bracelets:** Give away the bracelets made during the Coming Together and Engaging activity to another group in the church. Plan

a mini-party with snacks, and wear the bracelets as a symbol of unity. The group could also make bracelets to sell at a church bazaar or other function to raise money for a special activity.

Study

- **Letters:** Write down your questions about how the Church uses scripture, tradition, and reason. Send the questions to your bishop, and ask for a reply.
- **Analogy:** Using the description of the car in the Personal Views section as an example, make up your own analogy for the relationship of the Church to scripture, tradition, and reason. Illustrate the analogy if possible.

Voices

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

Reason is nothing but the analysis of belief.
Franz Schubert

Almost any fool can prove that the Bible ain't so—it takes a wise man to believe it.
Josh Billings

[Tradition] cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor.
T. S. Eliot

We know the truth, not only by reason, but by the heart.
Blaise Pascal

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 828 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*For the Future of the Human Race
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 828*

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 scripture, tradition, and reason work together in the Episcopal Church? Can they differentiate among the three separate ideas? Can youth state the importance of scripture, tradition, and reason in their own faith?

The Episcopal Way: Finding the Middle Spiritual Life

Objective

This session focuses on the uniqueness of the Episcopal Church which shares tradition and beliefs with other faiths. Youth will be able to define the “middle way” as practiced by the Episcopal Church.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary provides a background for Episcopal beliefs and worship practices. Key terms are middle way, sacrament, creed, Catholic, and Protestant; the key resource is *The Book of Common Prayer*. For spiritual preparation, think about the difficulties of maintaining the balance of the middle way.

Commentary

The Wisdom of Solomon, found in the Apocrypha, describes God as guide and corrector. God provides the guidance that keeps his followers from deviating from God's desire for their lives. God continually brings people back to the center.

The Episcopal Church has been described as going the “middle way.” It is a sacramental and creedal Church. Sacraments are defined in the Catechism as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 857). The creeds followed by the Church include both the Apostles’ and Nicene creeds. The central focus of the Church is the liturgical worship style, with a primary focus on the Eucharist.

The Episcopal Church is distinct from the Roman Catholic Church and other Protestant churches. Some denominations are more confessional in nature, such as the Lutheran and

Presbyterian churches. They believe specific statements about their church. For some Protestant denominations, the word preached is a primary focus.

The Book of Common Prayer directs the worship of the Episcopal Church. The prayer book has strong historical roots in sixteenth century Roman Catholic worship. It is distinctly English, having come to life in the mid-1500s in England.

The middle way for the Episcopal Church focuses on common life together in worship and liturgy. While diversity may exist in worship styles, substance, and content are consistent. In the same way that Jesus was fully human and fully divine, the Episcopal Church simultaneously worships as fully Catholic and Protestant. A natural tension exists that has formed the tradition of the Church from its conception.

For further study: Read *A People Called Episcopalians* by John Westerhoff or *What is Anglicanism?* by Urban Holmes.

Personal Views

Episcopal churches are greatly diverse in size and shape. The makeup of Episcopal congregations is equally diverse. But worship generally follows the same patterns in almost any Episcopal church in the country.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*The Episcopal Shield*
 - **Key Verse**—*May God grant me to speak with judgment, and to have thoughts worthy of what I have received; for he is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise.*
—The Wisdom of Solomon 7:15
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, Ovid, William Bolitho
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Collect for Richard Hooker (LFF, November 3)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

May God grant me to speak with judgment, and to have thoughts worthy of what I have received; for he is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise. For both we and our words are in his hand, as are all understanding and skill in crafts. For it is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements; the beginning and end and middle of times, the alternations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild animals, the powers of spirits and the thoughts of human beings, the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots; I learned both what is secret and what is manifest, for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me.

The Wisdom of Solomon 7:15-22a

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- The purpose of this session is to help youth better understand the Episcopal Church. Other denominations and faiths should be treated with respect.
- Help youth identify situations in their lives when it is best to take the “middle way.” For example, sometimes it is better to find a compromise with parents than to be stubborn.
- **Discussion Starter:** Is it easier to find a compromise or insist that you are right?

Episcopal churches also have a particular “personality” that reflects their communities. Finding the middle way means that we can be open-minded and accepting. We may tolerate ambiguity in a way that is different from other churches. The Episcopal Church celebrates a relative freedom for all sides to be heard.

Living in this tension can be taxing and stressful for congregations. While searching, open-mindedness, and questioning are encouraged in our church, some people want to know exactly where we stand on “the issues.” This is the difficulty in living in the tension of the “middle way.”

Beauty and tradition in worship and liturgy are central to us. The Episcopal Church stresses the importance of a community gathering together to worship God. It is this community, tolerant of ambiguity and seeking to be prayerfully patient, that makes the Episcopal Church unique.

What part of the Episcopal Church is most meaningful to you? Are you frustrated at times by its ambiguity? What drew you to the Episcopal Church?

May Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who has put the desire into your heart to seek the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant you the power of the Holy Spirit to persevere in this intention and grow in faith and understanding.
The Book of Occasional Services, p. 116

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Put a bag of sandwich cookies on a table. As youth enter, invite them to take a cookie. Ask them which is the best part of the cookie.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find *Wisdom 7:15-*

22a in their Bibles. This book is near the beginning of the Apocryphal section of the Bible. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, we pray for the Episcopal Church and the people that are a part of it. We also ask that you open our hearts to see the middle way. Your wisdom and love is so strong. Show us how to be more accepting and loving toward others searching for your love. Bless our Church as we reach out to all people and welcome them.

Christina, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from The Wisdom of Solomon, chapter 7, verses 15 through 22a.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Ask youth to name every denomination of Christian churches in your community. Draw a horizontal line across a piece of newsprint. Without specific directions, ask them to write the names of the churches along the line.

- What criteria did you use to place the churches on the line?
- Where did you put the Episcopal Church? Why?

On another piece of newsprint, make two columns. On one side, ask the youth to name all the ways the Episcopal Church is like the other churches. On the other side, name ways the Episcopal Church is different. For example, we all believe in Jesus, but we have different forms of baptism.

Briefly describe the “middle way” of the Episcopal Church. Mention connections to both the ancient Catholic traditions, such as sacraments and creeds, and the emphasis on wor

ship and liturgy. Note that *The Book of Common Prayer* is central to worship in the Episcopal Church.

After talking about the middle way, look at the “church line” the youth made at the beginning of this activity. Ask them if they want to rearrange any of the churches, especially the placement of the Episcopal Church. Note that the churches are on a horizontal plane: one is not above another.

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

- **Diorama:** Bring in construction paper, gift wrap, glue, glitter, scissors, popsicle sticks, small pieces of cloth, and shoe boxes. Make a diorama of an Episcopal church inside a shoebox. A diorama is a miniature model of a setting constructed in a container. What church furniture is important? What other symbols should be included? Who is in the church? Make a brief visit to your own church to help youth determine which elements to include in their diorama(s). Display the boxes when they are complete.
- **Banner:** Make a banner for your church out of cloth or from a large piece of posterboard about the middle way.
- **Poetry:** Reread the scripture passage in *Wisdom*. Note that it is actually written as poetry. Select one or more verses and write your own poem about God's wisdom and guidance for all people.

Games

- **In the middle:** Play a game of monkey-in-the-middle. Divide the youth into two groups on either side of a line that divides the room. Assign one person to be in the middle. The object of the game is to throw a large ball from one group to the other without letting the person in the middle touch or catch it. When the person in the middle touches the ball, another person is put in the middle. The game is over when everyone has had a chance to be in the middle.

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:** Ask youth to name current movies or television shows that relate to religion and churches. How are churches portrayed in the media? Are any of the churches or clergy in these movies or shows similar to your own church and clergy? How are they different?
- **Print:** Collect service leaflets from different denominations in your community. Compare the leaflets with one used in your church. How are the services similar? How do the worship styles vary? How many churches use creeds? Is Eucharist a part of Sunday worship services?

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context

WEAVINGS

- The middle way often comes from compromise. The dictionary defines compromise as a settlement of differences by arbitration or by consent reached by mutual concessions. It can also be the blending of the qualities of two different things into one entity. Sometimes taking the middle way is not the most expedient way to live. However, Christ calls us not only to love our neighbor, but also to love our enemies. By taking the middle way, enemies can become neighbors over time.
- In the early stages of its formation, the Anglican church faced many difficult issues. One of the issues related to baptism. As political rulers in England alternated between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism, the people were agitated about the validity of earlier baptisms. Richard Hooker, an early Anglican theologian who first proposed the middle way, made the argument that God recognized all baptisms, Catholic or Anglican. His writings about the middle way still guide the Episcopal Church today.

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 "Tis the gift to be simple" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554). Does the middle way help us find "true simplicity"?
- Sing "We Have Come Into His House" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 245). Could this song be sung in any of the churches the group has talked about?
- Listen to "If Your Heart Belongs to Jesus" by Mark Lowry on *The Last Word*. The song is a reminder that having Jesus in your heart is more important than which church you attend.

Service

- **Flyers:** Take a picture of your church and use it on a flyer to announce a special event or the schedule of worship services at your church. Make it clear that all people are invited to attend. Put the flyers in store windows, retirement homes, social service agencies, and other places in the community.

Sharing

- **Worship space:** Find a way to decorate the worship space for a specific season or another occasion. For example, the youth could hang the banner about the middle way near the feast day for Richard Hooker on November 3 (see the Expressions activities). Youth could also help decorate the church for Easter or Christmas or make an Advent wreath.

Study

- **Theologian:** Find out more about the theologian Richard Hooker in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, November 3. See what a Roman Catholic pope had to say about the work of this Anglican clergyman.
- **Taking the middle way:** Ask youth to list every place in their lives they take the middle way. For example, if they spend all their efforts on one subject in school, what happens to their other classes? How do you take the middle way in sports?
- **Compromise:** Read about the one of the more famous compromises in the Bible proposed by King Solomon. Find out his solution for the two women who each claimed a child as her own in *1 Kings 3:16-28*. Was the compromise fair? Why did Solomon suggest it?

Voices

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

Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.

Mark Twain

There are many faiths, but the spirit is one, in me, in you, and in every [person].

Leo Tolstoy

You will go most safely in the middle.

Ovid

That great [destination] of all common sense: compromise.

William Bolitho

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the Collect for Richard Hooker, November 3, in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (also on p. 3 of the Session Leaflet).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O God of truth and peace, . . . Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace, but as a comprehension for the sake of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for Richard Hooker
Lesser Feasts and Fasts, November 3

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 define the "middle way" as exemplified by the Episcopal Church? Can they list ways the Episcopal is similar and different from other churches? Can they name the parts of the Episcopal Church that make it unique?