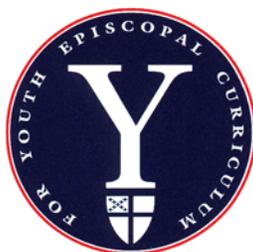


Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH 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 worshipping and learning in the Christian community, resisting evil, proclaiming the Good News of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

lecture and instruction.

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

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

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

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

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

UNDERSTANDING YOUNGER YOUTH

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

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

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

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

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

Theory—A Source of Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Literature—A Source of Understanding

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

Contemporary writers such as Madeleine L'Engle, and Cynthia 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.

SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

The content of this module focuses on the Sacraments of the Episcopal Church, Baptism and Eucharist. It also includes other rites such as Reconciliation, Unction, Confirmation, Marriage, and Ordination. In *Sacraments of the Church*, each session examines the sacrament or rite as it affects the lives of young people and their decisions to follow Christ. Seeing themselves as Christians in the world and responding to God's call in relationship to the worshipping community, based on the promises of the Baptismal Covenant, is the hoped for outcome of this course of study.

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

For Teachers

- **Leader's Guide** (this volume)
Contains 9 sessions of material. The sessions are:
Baptism: Believing
Baptism: Living in Christ
Eucharist: Jesus Comes
Eucharist: Bread of Life
Reconciliation: God's Forgiveness
Healing: Anointing the Sick
Confirmation: Renewing Promises
Marriage: Promises to Keep
Ordination: God's Call

- **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

Baptism: Believing Sacraments of the Church

Objective

This session will focus on the promises made at baptism that are a commitment to our faith. Youth will be able to name the ways in which the promises made at baptism affirm our faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session centers on the questions asked and the promises of faith made at baptism. The key terms are belief, baptism, and the Trinity. Think about the depth of the commitment that being a member of Christ's body demands of every Christian.

Commentary

Baptism is the sacramental rite at which we recognize that God has adopted us as God's children, claiming us as members of Christ's body, the Church, and, therefore, God's kingdom. Christian life begins, in a sense, with baptism: reenactment of the cleansing of sins through the saving act of Jesus' death and resurrection; repentance of those things that separate people from the love of God; and finally acceptance of a unique and loving relationship with God. The "outward and visible" sign of water marks us as baptized in the name of the God of the Trinity and as "Christ's own forever." We are also given "inward and spiritual" grace, union with Christ, birth into God's family, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit. (See *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 858.)

The early roots of the Jewish baptismal rite are obscure. However, there is evidence that it was practiced in the centuries before Jesus' arrival as a means of bathing for ritual purity.

John baptized the people to wash away their wrongdoing, to challenge them to live a new life in keeping with the commandments of God, and to prepare their hearts for the messiah. Jesus' own baptism stands as the fulfillment of John's promises, for Jesus came to baptize the people with the Holy Spirit.

The act of baptism ties all Christians to an experience of dying to sin and rising again to new life as God's people. The whole community gathers as the candidate for baptism (and their parents and godparents) reject the evil powers of this world and claim the promise of new life in Jesus Christ.

All this is done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, an ancient formula for baptism used by the first Christians. As they renounced their old lives and the works of the devil, they literally turned around to face a new life in Christ, being immersed in water three times, each time saying, "I believe in God the Father." "I believe in Jesus Christ." and "I believe in the Holy Spirit." It is from this ancient formula that the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed are written.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art for the Liturgical Year* by Schmidt
- **Key Verse**—"I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."—Mark 1:8
- **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
- **Voices**—Madeleine L'Engle, Malcolm Boyd
- **Daily Reflections**
- **Words to Remember**
- **Prayer**—At Baptism (BCP, p. 254)

For further study: Review the liturgy for Holy Baptism (BCP, p. 298) and the explanatory statements in the Catechism (BCP, p. 857-859).

LECTOR'S TEXT

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. . . . He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."
Mark 1:4-5; 7-11

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may be interested in discussing infant baptism. They may want to know why the Church doesn't wait until children can decide for themselves. Discuss other important decisions parents make on behalf of children.
- During many baptisms, promises are made by others for you. Don't take it for granted that the youth are ready to accept all of those promises. Be open to their questions.
- **Discussion Starter:** What is the most important promise you ever made? Whom did you make it to? Did you keep it?

Personal Views

The idea of claiming a new identity, of starting life again as a new person after baptism raises many critical questions. Did we belong to God before we were baptized? What about people who are never baptized? Does it make any difference? What happens to this "new identity" when we inevitably sin again? Do we just get baptized again?

It is important to consider these questions in light of our own life and experience, and in our understanding of the Church's sacraments. The loving invitation to be in a covenant relationship with God is a constant. God has already acted on our behalf, time and again, as recounted in the stories in the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. Will we recognize and accept this blessed relationship?

The sacrament of Holy Baptism draws a community together in remembrance of all that God has done and continues to do for us. Then it provides certain people who feel prepared to make the commitment an opportunity to claim that relationship as their own, one which they have sought and are prepared to uphold and nurture.

Baptism is an initiation once and forever into a relationship with God. We acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior, and we ask God's help in doing God's will through the Holy Spirit.

All praise and thanks to you, most merciful Father, for adopting us as your own children, for incorporating us into your holy Church, and for making us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 311

Coming Together

(Time: 5-10 min)

Before youth arrive, arrange the meeting space to allow youth to be in a circle around the baptismal font with a pitcher of water nearby, or place a large bowl and a pitcher of water in the center of the room. Display Resource Poster No. 5, *I Baptize Thee*, in a place everyone can see it. Invite each youth to pour a little water into the bowl or font as they take their place in the circle.

Ask the youth to turn to Mark 1 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read the following prayer together (p. 2 of the Session Leaflet).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Being a

Person

Adopted

By God.

In his eyes, he sees the good in my heart. May he bless my soul. All the days of my life I shall let God's love shine on my heart and give me peace. Amen.

Mike, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 1, verses 4 through 5 and 7 through 11.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 20-30 min)

Read together the questions and promises made by baptismal candidates (BCP, p. 302-303). Discuss the requirements of those seeking baptism. What changes are they being asked to make? What elements of the world are they being asked to resist?

Copy the requirements of baptism on a blackboard or newsprint so the whole group can see them. Make available posterboard for each youth, magazines and newspapers, scissors, and glue. Ask the youth to create a

collage beginning with a symbol or picture that represents themselves at the center. Surround this picture with representations of things that make them think about God. Ask them to explain the symbols on their posters. Allow sufficient time for them to share their work and reflections with the rest of the group.

For further discussion:

- These are things that help us feel connected to God. What are the temptations that lead us away from God?
- What beliefs are part of my baptismal promises?
- How can God help me keep those promises?

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

- **Mural:** Create a mural depicting the actions recalled in the prayer “Thanksgiving over the Water” (BCP, p. 306-7). Include the waters of creation (Genesis 1); the Israelites being led through the Red Sea (Exodus 14); and Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1). They can use realistic portrayals or symbols in the mural. (Use Resource Poster 5 for ideas.)
- **Trinity:** Identify symbols of the Trinity in the church and in the world. Create a picture by superimposing designs of Trinity symbols, representing God the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Games

- **Word associations:** Invite youth to say out loud the very first thing that comes to mind when they

hear God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit. Allow sufficient time to explore the images, meanings and possibilities in the answers with the entire group.

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 *It Could Happen to You* about keeping promises. Discuss the costs and benefits of keeping our promises to God and each other.
- **Print:** Pass out copies of the front pages of a daily newspaper you collected during the week. Ask youth to find ways people have either denied or upheld the promises made during baptism. (For example, respecting or destroying the dignity of others, working for peace efforts, etc.)

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 together “We know that Christ is raised and dies no more” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 296). What do the words say happens at baptism?
- Sing “I Will Be With You” *Gather* (GIA Publications, Inc.) 322.

WEAVINGS

- This session could be scheduled in conjunction with a discussion about confirmation.
- We rarely use the words “renounce” or “renunciation.” The dictionary defines renunciation as a formal abandoning of a right or the voluntary giving up, especially at a sacrifice. Just as Christ made the ultimate sacrifice for each of us, we are asked to make a sacrifice for God.
- Throughout the world, people’s lives are governed by the supply of water, the rhythms of their lives in tune to the coming and going of water. For this reason, many other religious and cultural traditions use water as a symbol of physical and spiritual cleansing and new birth, or as a part of an initiation rite into the community.

RESOURCE POSTER

- *I Baptize Thee* (No. 5)

- Listen to a recording of “I Believe the children are the Future” by Whitney Houston. Is there a connection with what the song says and Baptism?

Service

- **Serving all persons:** At baptism we promise to renounce “the evil powers of this world. . .” Plan a church-wide project to gather toys and toiletries for a shelter for battered women and their children. Use this as an opportunity for youth to talk with other groups about keeping baptismal vows.

Sharing

- **Telling others:** Invite the youth to present the posters made during the Engaging activity to the parish's baptismal class and explain why they chose the images they included. What did they learn about themselves in the process of creating the posters?

Study

- **Lyrics:** A great deal of concern has been raised about music lyrics that appear to glorify evil. Ask youth to identify lyrics from songs they know that may have been the target of criticism. Is there a valid reason for concern?

- **Initiation:** Most organizations ask for a certain commitment from new members before their full initiation. Some are more demanding than others in terms of specific requirements. Find out the level of commitment required by community groups youth are involved in.

Voices

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

It is baptism itself that I am talking about. . .It is the gift that matters. It is death and life.

Madeleine L'Engle

Someone is being baptized into your own life and death, Lord. Someone is being made a member of the church, your own body. Don't let this baptism be shunted off into a small corner of a big church, or into a quiet hour with a handful of people. Let this baptism be a principal part of the whole church's life, Jesus. Make us all realize that we are profoundly involved in it because someone is being ordained to a lifetime of discipleship and ministry in your spirit and name.

Malcolm Boyd

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 254 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

At Baptism

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth identify ways their own lives relate to the questions asked and the promises made at baptism? Can they describe the kind of life a person who is baptized into the family of God should live?

Baptism: Living in Christ

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

This session will focus on the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant that examine how we live out our faith. Youth will be asked to name ways these promises are lived out by Christians in today's world.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session centers on the last five questions asked and the promises made at baptism. The key terms are apostles' teachings, repentance, proclamation, serving, and peace and justice. Consider what being a member of Christ's body means for every Christian.

Commentary

In this Sacrament, we are "sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." We are accepted into the family of God as members of Christ's body.

We are then asked to respond to God's promise by committing our lives in service to God. We are asked to live out the Gospel message: to make disciples of all nations, to pray, to teach others about Christ, to serve the poor, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to treat others as we would be treated.

After his baptism in the River Jordan by John the Baptist, Jesus is driven into the wilderness where he is tempted by the devil three times. Jesus was offered all of the things that we find tempting today.

In James 1:12-15, the author makes it clear that God does not tempt us but in fact makes it possible for us to resist temptation.

The promises that we make "with God's help" give us a guide by which we can serve God in our lives. We are asked to think about our own lives—to continue in the apostles' teachings following what we have learned from the people who followed and taught us about Jesus. We are asked to continue in the breaking of the bread—to share in the celebration of the Eucharist. And we are asked to continue in the prayers—to pray without ceasing both with others and by ourselves.

The next question we are asked is will we "persevere in resisting evil, and whenever [we] fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?" Will we follow Jesus' example and turn away from the temptations of power, control, or worshipping other gods?

We are then asked three questions that examine our relationships with others. Will we share the Word of God, the Scriptures, with other people by what we do as well as by what we say? Will we keep the commandment that Jesus named as the second greatest, and love our neighbors as ourselves—seeking and serving Christ in all persons? And will we strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being?

These are not easy guidelines to follow. They demand the very best from every baptized Christian.

For further study: Review the liturgy for Holy Baptism (BCP, p. 298) and the explanatory statements in the Catechism (BCP, p. 857-859).

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art for the Liturgical Year* by Schmidt
 - **Key Verse**—"But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves."—James 1:22
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—George Fox, Jane Austen
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—At Baptism (BCP, p. 308)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when being tempted should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. . . . But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and , on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

James 1:12-13;22-25

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- While the focus is on action—doing the word of God—we must be careful to avoid works as the only way to gain favor with God or to reach the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul talks about faith as a gift from God, we can do nothing to earn it or change it. Like faith, the gift of baptism is God's gift to us through Scripture and the Church. What we do with that gift is important.
- **Discussion Starter:** While God does not ask us for anything in return for the gift of faith, we do have a responsibility to live out that faith in our daily lives. In what ways are you an example of your faith?

Personal Views

As God's people in the world we are free to make choices in our lives. The choices we make can make a great deal of difference in what happens to us, good or bad. As Robert Frost says "I chose the road less traveled by and that made all the difference."

Scott Peck, in his book "The Road Less Traveled" has picked up on this theme in relation to good and evil in the world. Choosing to follow God is not easy. It requires us to carefully consider the choices we make in light of God's will for our lives.

How do we know what God's will may be for us? We can read the Bible, obey the Ten Commandments, pray daily, and do our best to keep the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works.
Amen.

At Baptism

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 308

Coming Together

(Time: 5-10 min)

As youth arrive, hand each one a crisp one dollar bill. Don't offer any explanation. If pressed simply say that the dollar is a gift. Note what questions, comments or jokes the youth make, particularly if they ask what they should do with it or if they have to give it back.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to turn to *James*

1:12-13; 22-25; select a lector and read the following prayer together (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God,

Help us to begin our quest for a stronger belief in you through baptism. We pray for the ability to remain faithful in this quest when we become frustrated and feel that you are not with us. Help us to become closer to you through this journey that begins with baptism. Amen.

Elizabeth, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from the letter of James chapter 1, verses 12 through 13 and 22 through 25.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 20-30 min)

Take out a dollar bill of your own, making sure all the youth have the ones given to them during the Coming Together activity. Explain that everyone has been given a gift today and is free to do with it whatever he/she wants. They can spend it, invest it, share it, whatever. The choice is theirs.

Tell the class they will hear a series of statements. Ask them to respond with actions: stand if you strongly agree; sit in a chair if you agree; sit on the floor if you disagree; or kneel on the floor if you strongly disagree. Read the following statements allowing time for the youth to respond:

- *God loves some people more than others.*
- *Being a Christian means I can't do the things my friends do.*
- *I must do the right thing for God to love me.*
- *Being a Christian means praying all the time.*
- *Being a Christian means being nice to people I don't like.*

- *Being a Christian means reading the Bible every day.*

After reading the statements ask the youth to state some of their own beliefs about being a Christian.

Explain that, like the dollar, baptism is a gift from God. We can do with it whatever we want. If I wish, I can take this dollar and tear it up (tear the dollar to make a dramatic impact). If I do, the gift is still mine, but it has been wasted. I can be thankful for this gift and use it to do something for myself or for others. The choice is mine.

For further discussion:

- What are the hardest temptations to resist?
- What kind of changes will I have to make to keep my baptismal promises?
- How can God help me keep those promises?

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

- **Baptismal Cards:** An executive from a large greeting card company visits your class. They have discovered that youth do not buy cards for babies, children, youth or others that are being baptized. They are eager to get a corner on this market. You are asked to design the card. Provide materials such as paper, markers, glitter, and glue.
- **Teaching:** Before each baptism in your church, there is a class for parents and godparents. The clergy have asked that the youth teach the group about the requirements in the last five promises made in the Baptismal

Covenant. Divide the questions among the youth and decide what you would teach.

Games

- **Answer the Question:** Divide the class into groups and ask each group to write one of the five action questions from the Baptismal Covenant on a large sheet of paper. (If the group is small, a question may be assigned to individuals or groups may do two or more questions.) Using magazine pictures, drawings, or words, each member of the group can illustrate ways that the promise can be lived out. Trade sheets and add to the examples. Stop when all have had a chance to participate.

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 a video of any sitcom on television, appropriate for the group. Look for illustrations of people caring for others, treating others with dignity, etc. Discuss the costs and benefits of keeping our promises to God and each other.
- **Print:** Invite the learners to read C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*. A copy of the book is available on audio tape. Play the tape or read Chapter II. Other relevant chapters are I, III, IV, XI, and XIV.

Music

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

WEAVINGS

- This session can be a part of a unit on service to others. It also could be used to discuss sacrifice during Lent.
- This session focuses on the last five promises of the Baptismal Covenant that we call "action questions." Action implies movement and energy. The Christian faith first calls us to belief, then to action.
- Christians act out their faith in many ways. Look at people in your own congregation: some work with the poor, others help the dying, others visit the sick or shut-in; the ministries are as varied as the people that perform them. Christians also reach outside of their own communities to minister to people in other parts of this country as well as other nations. How do you "act" out your faith?

RESOURCE POSTER

- *I Baptize Thee* (No. 5)

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 together “Lord you give the great commission” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 528). What do the words call us to do?
- Sing “Here I Am, Lord” from *Gather*, 492 (GIA Publications, Inc.)
- Listen to a recording of “The Circle of Life” by Elton John. What is the connection to baptism?

Service

- **Thirty-hour famine:** This is a weekend event similar to a “lock in” and is intended to increase awareness in world hunger. The weekend begins with a World Hunger Dinner, during which some students (chosen at random) eat a full dinner, while others eat a minimum ration (water and rice), and others eat nothing. The youth then fast for twenty-four hours, while they learn about what it means to be hungry in most of the world. (World Vision 919 West Huntington Dr., Monrovia CA 91016).

Sharing

- **Helping Others:** Make cloth books for younger children in the church. For each page or set of pages create an activity that relates to the eight questions of the Baptismal Covenant.

Study

- **Literature:** For a further exploration of the Sacrament of Baptism, read Caroline Westerhoff’s *Calling* published by Cowley.

Voices

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

O Lord, baptize our hearts
into a sense of the conditions
and needs of all.
George Fox (adapted)

Incline us, O God!
to think humbly of ourselves,
to be saved only in the examination
of our own conduct,
to consider our fellow creatures
and to judge of all they say and do
with the charity which we would
desire from
them ourselves.
Jane Austen

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 254 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet p. 2). Read it in unison.

Leader: *Let us pray.*
Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

At Baptism
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth explain ways in which people live their lives following the promises made at their baptism? Can they describe the kind of things they can do to keep these promises for themselves?

Eucharist: Jesus Comes

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

In the Eucharist, the “saving” events of Christ’s life are powerfully proclaimed and remembered. In this session youth will discover how Christ’s presence is evoked at the Eucharist through the remembrance of his sacrifice. Youth will also be able to describe the different parts of the service of Holy Communion and how these help us experience the presence of Christ.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on the power of remembrance in the Eucharist. For spiritual preparation, recall your own memories of the Eucharist and how you remember Christ through this event.

Commentary

In his first letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul told the Corinthians how to celebrate the Eucharist, instructions he said he received from the Lord himself. Paul told them to repeat what Jesus had done at the Last Supper concluding with Jesus’ words, “Do this in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:24b)

Christians believe that through Christ’s life and sacrifice they have been restored to a new, loving relationship with God, a relationship once lost. Christians value their restored relationship with God as the most important thing in their lives. Jesus brought people back to God by living a perfect human life, allowing his perfect life to be destroyed by the forces of evil, breaking the power of these forces forever by rising to new life from the grave, and inviting us to share in that new life.

In the Eucharist these restoring events of Christ’s life are solemnly proclaimed, and they become present with all their power. This is called *anamnesis* (pronounced, “eh-NAM-neh-sis”).

In the oldest translations of Paul’s letter, we interpret this word as “remembrance.” Remembrance, however, is a misleading translation because it poorly communicates the Greek meaning of the word and the Hebrew idea that lies behind it. The English word remembrance usually means mental recollection, but Paul meant something far more powerful.

The Hebrew concept behind the Greek term is the bringing into the present an act that took place in the past. Moreover, the Hebrews believed that the past event becomes the present with all its original effectiveness. It is a literal “re-calling” of a past historic event with all its power.

The Eucharist for Christians was much more than a meal of remembrance, it was also a sign of the coming of the kingdom. “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”

The Eucharist is even more than the remembering of what is past and looking toward the future. For in the Eucharist, Christ is present, and communion with God, through Jesus, has been restored.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—W. Ellwood Post, *Saints, Signs, and Symbols*
 - **Key Verse**—*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.* 1 Corinthians 11:26
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Negro spiritual, Vankayya, George Appleton
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 366
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

—1 Corinthians 11:23-26

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- The ideas explored in this session may be difficult for many youth to grasp. Tell them that the act of remembrance is not necessarily an intellectual phenomenon. Suggest that they try to "feel" Christ's presence the next time they come to the Eucharist.
- Be sure to use words that youth can easily grasp; the concepts are difficult without wrestling with confusing vocabulary.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you ever felt someone's presence even though they have died or moved far away?

Personal Views

The concept of remembrance and the presence of Christ at the Eucharist is difficult for most people. Theologians have been attempting to explain what it means for centuries. Debate continues about what actually happens leading to different traditions that have different interpretations.

In the struggle to understand, theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, have said that one must be at an age of understanding. This belief meant that children and some adults were excluded from receiving the bread and wine.

Anglican (Episcopal) theology can be summed up in the words of Queen Elizabeth I of England, "He was the Word that spake it, He took the bread and break it; And what that Word did make it, I do believe and take it."

Reflect on the presence of Christ at the Eucharist. Think about what that means in your life.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who in a wonderful Sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of thy passion: Grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood, that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of thy redemption; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

After Receiving Communion
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 834

Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Before the youth arrive, place the following objects around the room: a phone, a photo album, souvenirs of an event, and a homemade videotape of youth activities. As the youth arrive invite them to look

around the room and list, on a piece of paper, the things they see that would help them remember someone who has moved away.

When all are present select a lector to lead the group. Read the following prayer in unison (Session Leaflet, p.2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear Lord, Help us to feel your presence while at your altar. Strengthen us spiritually, and help us to be the kind of people you want us to be.

Help us to feel your presence not only at your table, but also at school, at home, and at play. Thank you for all your gifts, O Lord. Amen.

John, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from First Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 23 through 26.*

(Full text is on p. 2.)

Lector: *The word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Ask the youth to share the lists they made in the "Coming Together" activity. Write these down on a large piece of paper. Ask them to add other ways we remember those who are not with us.

Ask the class to turn to the section on The Holy Communion in Rite II, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 361 (or one of the alternative forms beginning on page 367). Look at each section of the service and ask the young people to describe what is happening in each part. What is happening that helps us remember Jesus? What is said that denotes Christ's presence? What indicates a waiting for something?

Look at the list you made together and compare it with the parts of the Communion service. For example, we relate the saving story of Jesus just as we share stories about a favorite relative or friend who recently visited us; we thank God as we are thankful for the role a person played in our lives; we

feel the closeness of Jesus as we remember the gift of a person's presence.

For further discussion:

- Do you have a memory that brings an event from the past back to life? Is it triggered by a picture, a place, a smell?
- How would you talk to a friend about Jesus' presence in the Eucharist? In your 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 which seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Role Play:** Ask volunteers to act out the following situations; encourage them to use words they would use in normal conversations. 1) Explain to a friend what happens at a Eucharist. 2) Retell the events of the Last supper. 3) Interpret the meaning of the coming of the Kingdom of God for an alien from another planet.
- **Fingerpaint:** Put a large piece of paper on the floor surrounded by different colors of fingerpaint. Ask the group to design a mural about the Eucharist using fingerpaints to "feel" the experience.
- **Writing:** Write a poem about Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Games

- **Good senses:** Play a game to test different senses and how they enable you to identify and note presence. Prepare a variety of foods and objects; allow blindfolded youth to guess what they are by using taste, smell, and touch.

- **Word Search:** Make a word search for a younger class using the following: remembrance, recall, memorial, present, proclaim, Eucharist, last supper, passion, death, resurrection, ascension.

Media

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

- **Video:** View portions of *Superman* or *Star Wars*. Look at scenes in which Superman's parents are present to him, and Obi Wan Kenobi is present to Luke. Discuss how the stories explain the presence of these persons from the past and how their presence is helpful to the heroes.
- **Print:** Hand out sections of the newspaper to pairs of youth. Ask them to find God in news stories, photos, and ads. Ask them to share how and where they think God is present.

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 together "In Remembrance of Me" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, p. 149).
- Sing or read, "I come with joy to meet my Lord" (*The Hymnal*

WEAVINGS

- The Bible was originally written in two languages, Hebrew and Greek. We often come across words that are difficult to translate into English. Think about words or phrases we use that would difficult to explain to people from other cultures.
- There may be people in our lives we remember with fondness, but have not contacted recently. Write a letter or call someone you haven't talked to or seen recently.
- Other cultures have special ways of remembrance, too. For example, the Japanese remember loved ones who have died by floating candles in a river. Find out other ways different cultures evoke the presence of the past.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Last Supper (No. 1)

1982, p. 304). Note the meaning of “recall” in verse 1.

- Listen to “My Brother’s Keeper,” *Brothers Keepers* (1990), by the Neville Brothers.

Service

- **Lay Eucharistic Ministers:** Many churches have lay people who take the blessed Sacrament to people who are in the hospital or unable to come to church. Make arrangements for youth to go along on one of these visits.

Sharing

- **Bread of Life:** Bake the bread for a Eucharist service for the youth. If possible, make bread for Eucharist services during one season of the church year.

Study

- **Compare:** Read Luke’s story of Jesus’ appearance to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, (*Luke 24:13-35*) the story of the first converts to Christianity after Peter’s preaching, (*Acts 2:41-42*) and the Baptismal Covenant, (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 304). Look for a phrase used in all three that relates to the Eucharist.

- **Field trip:** Visit the altar with a clergy person or member of the altar guild. Ask for a description of how the elements are blessed, and what is done with bread and wine that is left over. If the community uses Eucharistic bread, inspect it and think about how Jesus is the “Bread of Life.”

Voices

Read and discuss:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there?

O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble,

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Negro spiritual

O great God, who art thou?

Where art thou? Show thyself to me.

Venkayya (First outcast convert in South India. She offered this prayer every day for three years.)

I cannot grasp You
explain You
describe You

Only cast myself into the depths
of your mystery

Only let your love pierce the
cloud of my unknowing.

George Appleton

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Ask the youth to turn to page 366 of *The Book of Common Prayer* and read together the prayer below. (Session Leaflet, p.3)

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 366.

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Did most of the youth discover how we evoke Christ’s presence through the remembrance of his sacrifice at the Eucharist? Can they describe the different parts of the Communion service and how the service helps us experience the presence of Christ? Can they relate the idea of “re-calling” the past into the present to their own experiences?

Eucharist: Bread of Life

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

In the Eucharist, Christians come into communion with Jesus by receiving his Body and Blood into themselves. By this act Christians abide in Jesus, and Jesus in them. This session will challenge youth to consider the importance of making the Eucharist the center of their lives as Christians. Youth will be able to describe symbols used in the Eucharist and discover how Christ is present in their lives through participation in the Eucharist.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary focuses on the symbols used in the Eucharist as the outward and visible signs of Christ's presence and the inward and spiritual grace given to God's people and received in faith. Reflect on your own participation in the Eucharist. When has it been most meaningful to you? When have you noticed its absence?

Commentary

The Holy Eucharist is "the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" by which the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is made present. (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 859) The names that the service is known by indicates both the closeness and the divinity of Christ's presence. It is called the Holy Eucharist, meaning the Great Thanksgiving, and The Lord's Supper, referring to the Last Supper of Jesus and the disciples. Other names are Holy Communion, the Divine Liturgy, the Mass, and the Great Offering.

The outward and visible sign of the Eucharist is the bread and the

wine, symbols of Christ's Body and Blood "given and received according to Christ's command." Other lesser symbols, such as the chalice, the paten, the fine linens and altar hangings, and the vestments are designed to point to the bread and wine as the signs of inward and spiritual grace.

By God's grace we are given the Body and Blood of Christ and receive it by faith. In receiving the sacraments we receive the benefits of God's forgiveness of our sins. Our connections to Jesus Christ and to one another are also strengthened, and we are given a preview of what the heavenly banquet will be like in the promise of eternal life.

The act of receiving the bread and wine comes at the end of our worship together because we are meant to carry the inner strength with us out into the world, to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in the way we live our lives day to day.

For further study: Review the first five lessons of the *Episcopal Children's Curriculum*, Intermediate Chalice Year unit "Eucharist: Shared Life." These lessons present the structure of the eucharistic liturgy.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art for the Liturgical Year* by Schmidt
 - **Key Verse**—*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life."*—John 6:35
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Voices**—Henri J.M. Nouwen, Tilden Edwards
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Closing Prayer**—*The Book of Common Prayer*, p.365.
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Matthew 26:26-28

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth will have little difficulty in accepting reality that is conveyed by symbols. They do not have as great a need to find rational answers as adults do.
- Young people are learning to understand life in a world with experiences such as "virtual-reality" that are not easily explained, but nonetheless real and capable of being communicated through symbols. Their knowledge can be tapped about the use of symbols in computer software and video games when you discuss religious symbols.
- **Discussion Starter:** What happens when we receive the bread and wine at the Eucharist? What do you remember about receiving communion the first time?

Personal Views

The system of philosophy that has influenced the way twentieth-century people understand and know things focuses on physical matter that equates all reality with physical, measurable, observable events and objects. Water, for example, is simply molecules made up of two hydrogen atoms bonded to an oxygen atom; it is a physical substance with practical, observable uses. Other meanings of water—symbolic ones—belong to the realm of sentiment or fantasy. Many people have difficulty understanding how God uses water to forgive sin and create new Christ-like life in people.

For 2,000 years Christians have known that reality is also expressed through symbols. Symbols express the meaning of events and objects that are just as valid as experiments in physics and chemistry. In fact, the ability of humans to know and understand existence through symbols is fundamental to life. The Church has preserved a rich tradition of understanding faith through symbols, especially in the sacraments. Christians experience the reality of Jesus' eucharistic presence in bread and wine.

While symbols are very important, we must remember that it is the living presence of Jesus Christ that we carry with us every day. Participation in the Eucharist empowers us to live lives that are enriched and that enrich the lives of others. The benefits we receive from the Eucharist (forgiveness of sin, union with Christ and with each other, and the knowledge of the life eternal) allow us to live a life of love in a world full of temptations, struggle, and pain.

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteous

ness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 337

Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Sometime before the group gathers, bring in a chalice or cup of wine and a paten or plate of bread similar to those used in the Eucharist service at your church. Place them on a table in front of the room or set to one side.

As youth arrive, share a simple "meal" of soda or juice and chips or doughnuts together. The leader can pass out the food, saying something simple to each youth, such as "Here, this is for you," or "I hope you like this." A youth will follow behind with the drink.

When everyone is present, select a lector, and ask youth to find Matthew 26:26-28 in their Bibles. Read together the following (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray:*

Your blood is in my cup,

Your body in my hand,

Your strength in my heart,

And your spirit in my soul.

*Take this in remembrance
for Jesus has been crucified.*

Let his light shine on you

*and his presence be within you
while you weep as you touch his
body*

and feel his blood.

—Natasha, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 26, verses 26 through 28.*

(Full text on page 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord*

People: *Thanks be to God*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Discuss with the group what just occurred in the sharing of the food during the Coming Together activity. Ask the youth to describe what they just did with the food and drink. Was this an important part of our time together? At what other times do you share food at church? What food do we share at the Eucharist? How is the communion bread and wine different from this? How is it similar?

On a large sheet of paper, write the word "Symbol," and ask the youth to define it. Brainstorm different symbols widely used in today's culture. For example, the color red means "warning" or "danger." A red traffic light means stop, and red on a water tap denotes hot. Other symbols might be: the colors yellow (caution) and green (safety); an American flag; a dollar bill; a circle with a slash.

Ask the youth to identify symbols in the Eucharist service. Pick up the plate of bread and ask what it symbolizes. Ask the same question about the wine. Tell them that receiving the bread and wine is the same as receiving Christ's Body and Blood. Jesus gave us these symbols to bring him—all that he was, all that he accomplished—to everyone forever.

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

- **Reporting:** Tell the youth that some of them are going to attend the Last Supper as reporters. Others will be assigned key roles in the event, including Jesus, John, Peter, and Judas. The reporters will be allowed to observe the event, acted out by

their peers, and then given an opportunity to question the participants at the end of the supper. The reporters will then write or narrate their stories for the entire group.

- **Paper-Mache:** Make a chalice and paten out of paper mache or clay as symbols of Christ's presence at the Eucharist.

Games

- **Scavenger Hunt:** Divide youth into teams and ask them to find symbols throughout the church building. Tell them to write down where they found the symbol and draw a sketch of it. When they return talk about the symbols and their meanings. For help refer to *Signs and Symbols*, Post, Morehouse Publishing.
- **Charades:** Divide the youth into two groups. Give each team a symbol or situation to act out in silence. The other team must guess the meaning. Examples: a chalice, a loaf of bread, a cross, a person leaving church after the Eucharist, a person facing a difficult situation, drawing strength from Christ's presence.

Media

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

- **Video:** Watch together the scene of the Last Supper from the movie *Jesus of Nazareth*.
- **Poster:** Use Resource Poster No. 1, Salvador Dali's *The Last Supper*, to discuss the symbolism of the Eucharist.

WEAVINGS

- This session ties in with the first session about the Eucharist in this unit. The first emphasizes the ways Jesus is present at the Eucharist. The second helps us to understand the symbols of the Eucharist and the gifts we receive.
- If possible ask your priest to conduct an instructed Eucharist service with another group in conjunction with these sessions.
- Symbols are becoming more and more a part of life in this country and in the world. International symbols are used for highway signs and in other areas that cross cultural lines. What we call icons for computers are really symbols for different functions or files. Think about dependence on symbols in every facet of life.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Last Supper (No. 1)

Music

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

- Listen to John Michael Talbot's, "Communion Song." (*The Lord's Supper*, Birdwing Music, 1979)
- Sing or read "I am the bread of life" (*The Hymnal*, 1982, 335) Discuss the meaning of the lyrics.
- Listen to "One of Us" by Joan Osborne.

Service

- **Feeding the Hungry:** Jesus calls us to share with those less fortunate. See if it is possible for the youth to serve in a local soup kitchen.

Sharing

- **Reach Out:** Bake bread to be used in the community's Eucharist service.
- **Display:** Use the paper mache or clay cup and plate in a display of "Church Symbols." Share it with children's groups who are also studying the Eucharist.

Study

- **Passover:** Read about the Passover in *Exodus 12:1-14* to find out more about the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples.
- **Definitions:** Look up the word "Eucharist" in a regular dictionary and in a Bible dictionary. What are the differences?
- **Learning from Others:** Compare the way other Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper by contacting other churches about their beliefs, such as Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, among others.

Voices

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

The great mystery of the Eucharist is that God's love is offered to us not in the abstract, but in a wholly concrete form; not as an example or a theory, but as good for our daily life. The Eucharist opens the way for us to make God's love our own."
Henri J.M. Nouwen

It becomes a delightful gift expressing the mysterious Giver's love. And it becomes a natural opportunity for sharing that love.

Tilden Edwards

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read the prayer below in unison (Session Leaflet, p.3).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 365

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth describe the two main symbols used in the Eucharist service? Do they understand why the Eucharist is so important? Do they understand the importance and power of symbols in our lives?

Reconciliation: God's Forgiveness

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

This session will focus on renewing relationships with God. Youth will begin to discover how sin leads us to seek our own wills, separating us from God, and how the Church through "The Reconciliation of a Penitent" (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 446) helps to bridge this separation.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on confession and the sacramental rite of reconciliation. The key term is reconciliation. For spiritual preparation, think about the role of sin your own life. How have you dealt with confessing your sins? Forgiving others for theirs?

Commentary

The sacramental rite of reconciliation starts with the recognition that for whatever reason, human beings are estranged from one another and from God. Reconciliation means to repair, to refresh, to renew, and to make right a relationship that has been wronged.

A general confession in a service of The Daily Office or Holy Eucharist is the way most Episcopalians today experience reconciliation. Every time we participate in a service of Morning or Evening Prayer or Eucharist, we say together a confession of sin, and hear the words of absolution and pardon.

With these words we confront our separation from God and each other, recognizing that it is the will of God that we live in harmony with God, with creation, and with one another.

From the earliest stories in the Bible people tended to seek their own will instead of the will of God. When the Israelites followed Moses out of Egypt, for example, they repeatedly turned from God, resulting in a 40-year delay in reaching the Promised Land. Turning away from God is "sin" and distorts our relationship with God, with other people, and with all of creation.

Listen to the television or read the newspaper to see the results of sin. We are suspicious, jealous, and violent. There is hunger, poverty, pollution, and disease. Our world is filled with distrust, alienation, despair. Sin is an evil, powerful force that is hostile to God and resides in our political, economic, and social structures. The tendency to seek our own will instead of the will of God affects "thoughts," "words," and "deeds."

Before reconciliation can occur, the separation from God and each other must be recognized. Reconciliation between God and people took place in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The cross was an act of love in which Jesus Christ "made there a full and perfect sacrifice for the whole world" (BCP, p. 341). Those who repent of their sins can confess them to God whose mercy is unlimited. God does not abandon anyone.

Because reconciliation between God and humankind took place on the cross, we *participate in* that reconciliation through the sacrament of Baptism, and in the sacra-

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art: Block Prints for Sunday—Cycles A, B, C*
- **Key Phrase**—*Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you, in thought, word, and deed, . . .*
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 360
- **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
- **Voices**—African schoolgirl, Michael Quoist, Eric Sevaried
- **Daily Reflections**
- **Words to Remember**
- **Prayer**—For Guidance (BCP, p. 832)

ment of the Eucharist.

The sacramental rite of Reconciliation allows those who wish to repent of their sins, confessing them to God, in the presence of a priest, to do so. In this private and personal confession, we receive the assurance of pardon and the grace of absolution. As early as 1552, the Prayer Book included a general, public confession, while at the same time making available a private confession that today is called "The Reconciliation of a Penitent."

LECTOR'S TEXT

Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment!

II Corinthians 7:9-11a

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may be interested in discussing Original Sin in the story of Adam and Eve. Some may be skeptical about the concept of Original Sin or be angry about the idea that “the woman is to blame.” Challenge your learners to shift their attention from the HOW (Adam and Eve, the snake) to the WHY (why are human beings estranged from one another and from God? Why do we shift blame? Why do we not trust God to provide all our needs?).
- Talking about sin and reconciliation can put youth in a defensive posture. Stress the love God has for each of us and God's desire to be a part of our lives.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you ever asked God to forgive you for a specific act? What was that like?

Personal Views

“Sin” is an emotionally loaded word that many are reluctant to use. When we confess our sins, we are faced with uncomfortable truths about ourselves. Confession is not only a time to recognize our shortcomings and failures, but also a time to regret that sometimes we deliberately and knowingly choose to do wrong. We often wrestle with this issue in our own lives.

Many younger youth think of “sinning” in terms of breaking rules—disobeying parents, being noisy in church, smoking, and so on. Since many equate rule-breaking with sinning, confessions take on an air of saying we are sorry for failing to “keep the rules.” Others may think that sin happens, only when one “gets caught.”

We also tend to think of our faults as regrettable and unpleasant, but not necessarily sinful. We see our failings as mistakes, slip-ups, or lapses of judgment, but rationalize that “our heart was in the right place.” If we look deeper into our lives, however, we will discover the thoughts, words, and deeds that have turned us from God and each other. Take a few moments during the next week to return to God and to feel God's mercy.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion blot
out my offenses.
Wash me through and through
from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions
only too well,
and my sin is ever before me.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 449.

Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Set up the room with chairs in a circle facing an open area that will be used as a stage. Hang Resource Poster No. 2 of *The Scream*, by Edward Munch and a “No Trespassing” sign (Resource Poster No. 3). When everyone is present appoint a young person as lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p.2).

Lector: *Let us pray:*

*O lord, help me from my state
Lead me away from my own cold
night.*

Lead me away from hate.

*I have done many great injustices,
And I repent for my sins.*

So help me rid myself of this guilt.

Make me righteous again.

*I've carried this burden for an eter-
nity.*

*I've trapped myself in a world of
hate.*

Lord, release me from this burden.

Lord, let me be free again.

Andrew, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Paul's
second letter to the Corinthians,
chapter 7, verses 9 through 11.*

(Full text on p. 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord*

People: *Thanks be to God*

Engaging (Time: 20-25 min)

In a role play activity, the youth will explore how sin leads to separation from God. Use the poster of *The Scream* to talk about feelings we have when we are separated from God and each other.

If possible, divide into three groups. Ask each group to create a role play depicting one of the following situations. Examples: 1) Separation from God: a group of young people decides to skip

church because God is far away and doesn't really care about their problems. 2) Separation from each other: a group of young people at school decides to shun a person who just doesn't fit in the group. 3) Separation from creation: several youth visit an animal shelter and encounter unnecessary abuse of animals. Encourage youth to provide other examples.

After each group has presented their situation, ask them how they felt during the role play, especially the youth who was left out. Discuss ways to bridge these separations, and introduce the term reconciliation. Use the *No Trespassing* poster to describe how Jesus reconnected God and God's people.

For Further Study: Look up the service for "The Reconciliation of a Penitent" (BCP, p. 446). Point out the different sections of the reconciliation service.

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 which seem best suited to local time and talents.

Expressions

■ **Letters:** Pass out stationery and envelopes. Encourage each youth to write a letter, to someone from whom they feel distant or separated. Suggest that the following sentences may be used to get started: "I've noticed lately that. . .", "I wish we could . . .", "I intend to. . ." The youth may decide to mail the letter or not.

■ **Designing Feelings:** Using paint, markers, colored paper, scissors, invite the youth to respond to the painting of *The Scream*, by creating a portrait of their own feelings.

Games

■ **True/False:** Compile true/false questions, such as: Cheating on a test. Sharing homework. Not telling your friends you go to church. Shoplifting. Sleeping late. Spreading a rumor. Talking back to your parents, or other adults. Taking something from a family member without asking. Youth respond by standing if they think the statement is false and sitting if it is true. Spend some time discussing differences in the responses.

Media

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

■ **Video:** In the movie *Ordinary People* (available in video stores), the lack of forgiveness almost destroys a family.

■ **Print Media:** Look through newspapers and news magazines to find stories about the ways we are separated from God and each other. See if youth can also find stories about reconciliation.

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

- Lent would be an appropriate season for this session.
- Since God forgives our sins, we should forgive those who have sinned against us. Forgive one person this week who has hurt you in any way.
- Reconciliation is not a term used exclusively by the church. The dictionary describes it as a changed relationship for the better between persons or groups who were formerly enemies. Our culture, however, often brands conciliatory acts as weakness. Think about people such as Terry Waite or Desmond Tutu who courageously called for reconciliation in the world. Where else is this happening in the world?

RESOURCE POSTER

- *The Scream* (No. 2)
- No Trespassing (No. 3)
- Sacramental Symbols (No. 4)

- Read and discuss “Wilt thou forgive that sin, where I begun” (*Hymnal 1982*, p. 140).
- Sing the spiritual, “Down by the Riverside.”
- Play and discuss the song, “Sorry seems to be the hardest word” by Elton John.

Service

- **Caring for Others:** We are often separated from God by the way we treat God’s creation. Volunteer to clean up a park or playground so that it is a pleasant place to enjoy the outdoors.

Sharing

- **Forgive me:** A “confessional” is often depicted in movies or as a joke—the priest sits in one half of a dark booth, and the penitent sits in the other half, beginning with “forgive me Father, for I have sinned. . .” Encourage the youth to design their own sacrament of reconciliation, using the rite in the Prayer Book, p. 446, as a guide. Present it to another youth group in the church.

Study

- **Word Studies:** Look up the words “penance,” “penitent,” “contrite,” “contrition,” “forgiveness,” “absolve,” and “absolution” in a dictionary, and write the definitions in your own words.

- **Confessions:** Other faiths have rituals for returning to God. Find out about Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement.

Voices

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

O Thou great Chief, light a candle in my heart, that I may see what is therein, and sweep the rubbish from thy dwelling place.

An African schoolgirl’s prayer

I have just hung up; why did he telephone?

I don’t know...Oh! I get it...

I talked a lot and listened very little.

Forgive me, Lord, it was a monologue and not a dialogue.

I explained my idea and did not get his;

Since I didn’t listen, I learned nothing,

Since I didn’t listen, I didn’t help,

Since I didn’t listen, we didn’t communicate.

Forgive me, Lord, for we were connected,
and now we are cut off.

Michael Quoist

Human beings are not perfectible. They are improvable.

Eric Sevaried

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer below. (Session Leaflet, p. 3)

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Guidance

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832.

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can youth identify sin as “seeking our own will instead of the will of God?” Can they begin to understand that sin involves “thoughts” and “words” as well as “deeds?” Is there acknowledgement that there is a separation between the way things are intended by God and the way things are? Can they see a need for reconciliation? Can youth distinguish between making mistakes and deliberately choosing what is hateful and hurtful?

Healing: Anointing the Sick

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

Almost from the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus healed the sick. Just as Jesus and his disciples ministered the grace of healing, the Church today performs the laying on of hands to those who are sick. This session focuses on the service of the Ministration to the Sick in *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Church's role in healing. Youth will examine the healing service and be able to pray for those who need healing, including themselves.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary focuses on the role of healing in the Church and how it developed from Jesus' ministry. Ideas to reflect on are the existence of sickness and pain in a world created by God and the many different forms that healing takes.

Commentary

Teaching, healing and preaching were the hallmarks of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus passed on that ministry to his disciples by giving them authority to heal in his name through prayer and the laying on of hands. At that time, it was Jewish practice to anoint the sick with oil, a common medicine, and to offer prayers on their behalf.

An early record of the ministry to the sick is in James 5:14-16. The sick were anointed and encouraged to confess their sins. The result, according to Scripture, was restoration to health. The ministry of healing through prayer and anointment came to be known as unction, and liturgies for its celebration are found in various ancient sources.

In the early Church, recovery from illness was the expected result of anointing with oil. Because of the increasing emphasis during the Middle Ages on penitence, however, the sacramental rite became associated with the remission of sins. Consequently, the rite tended to be deferred until the point of death and became known as "extreme unction."

During the Reformation, many Christian communities did not include anointing among the sacraments. Rites for the visitation of the sick were devised emphasizing scripture, penitence, confession, and sometimes the administration of communion.

Today the original use of unction for the purpose of healing has been reclaimed. *The Book of Common Prayer* includes the "Ministration to the Sick," a liturgy that includes laying on of hands, and anointing with oil.

The question remains, today as it did in Jesus' time and before, why are some healed and others not? Job struggled with this issue, refusing to believe that he had done anything to deserve the catastrophes that were visited upon him. The psalmists also lamented the tragedies that befell them, seeking God's deliverance from the "mire and the pit" of intense despair.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art for the Liturgical Year* by Schmidt
 - **Key Verse**—*Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.*
—James 5:14
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Julian of Norwich, *Depeche Mode*
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For Health of Body and Soul (BCP, p. 460)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. . . . So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Mark 6:7, 12-13

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may have difficulty dealing with the issue of why some are healed and some people are not. By thinking and praying about this issue, the group can respond to questions and concerns.
- Youth tend to resolve moral issues in terms of "fairness." At the same time, youth are able to empathize with others or feel compassion. They can understand that the sick need help and prayers. Focus on ways youth can minister to the sick.
- Be prepared to talk about how God answers prayer. One author suggested four ways 1) No, not yet. 2) No, I love you too much. 3) Yes, I though you'd never ask. 4) Yes, and here's more.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you ever asked God to heal another person or yourself?

Personal Views

Learning about ministry to the sick brings Christians face to face with the problems of injury and illness in the world. Simply put, why do bad things happen to good people?

Because all people are bound together in a common humanity and connected to God's creation, the actions of one person often affects others. The consequences of sin can fall upon the innocent.

Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, and floods, also bring illness and injury into the world often affecting those with very little in the first place.

The answer to these issues and problems can only be provided by God. We do know that Christ, through his perfect sacrifice, conquered death and saved us from sin. We also know that through the mysterious activity of the Holy Spirit, God can bring good out of disaster, but only if we are open to God's work in our lives.

*O God, the source of all health:
So fill my heart with faith in your love, that with calm expectancy I may make room for your power to possess me, and gracefully accept your healing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

For Trust in God
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 461

Coming Together

(Time: 5-10 min)

As the group assembles, ask each of them to think of one person—a relative, a friend, a teacher, someone in the news—who needs to be healed. Ask them to write these prayer requests on slips of paper, and place them in a basket after folding the slips several times.

Ask the youth to find *Mark 6:7, 12-13* in their Bibles. Select a lector to read the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Almighty God, you who have blessed us with your power to heal. Allow us to receive spiritual rebirth through yourself and all your saints. God, heal our unhappy relations in our lives and in the lives of others. Let the nations of the world work in cooperation and in peace. Give us the strength we need to go through the healing process and to live in full accordance of your will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Jonathan, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from The Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verse 7, and 12 through 13.*

(Full text on p. 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 30 min)

Gather a collection of magazines and newspapers. Invite the youth to make a collage of pictures that show or relate to healing. When they have finished ask how many of the pictures relate to God? What messages do most of these pictures convey? What is the role of the Church in the ministry of healing?

Some studies have shown that those who pray and are connected with a church have a better chance of recovery from surgery and illness than others. Discuss the pros and cons of this research.

People minister to the sick in many different ways. What kind of services do these people perform? Have you ever thought about doing this kind of work?

Optional Activities

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

Expressions

- **Prayer list:** Purchase enough small blank books, available in book and stationary stores. Invite the youth to decorate the book to make it their own. Invite them to copy prayers for the sick or other prayers they read or write. Include a list of people they wish to pray for.
- **Preparing Oil:** In small containers (2 oz) prepare oil suitable for use as massage oil for joint or muscle injuries, put two tablespoons of olive oil in a small container. Add, in tiny increments, a mild, fresh-scented agent, such as peppermint or almond flavoring. Strong scents should be avoided.
- **Mural:** Read James 5: 14-15. Illustrate this early account of healing in a large mural. Assign youth different characters in the story to be included in the mural.

Games

- **Back Rubs:** Touch is one of the most healing things we can do for someone who is hurting. Often just holding someone's hand can be comforting. Youth can learn to give back rubs, liturgical style. Make a circle so everyone is close enough to the person in front to rub their back. Invite each one to rub the back of the person in front of them for a few minutes; now reverse the circle. Youth can sing or chant while rubbing backs.
- **Perseverance.** One of the hardest things about being ill or injured is being patient and trying again and again to get stronger or ac-

cept the need to rest. This game tests the perseverance of youth to try something difficult again and again. Place a strip of masking tape on the floor. Ask youth to put their toes on the line. They must kneel down and get back up again without using their hands or moving their feet.

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:** Plan a "Movie Night," and watch *Leap of Faith*, starring Steve Martin. Discuss miracles of healing in the film and the role of faith.
- **Print:** Invite the youth to read the children's book *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*. Ask them to name ten good things about a pet or something they love.

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** together "Lord give us your Spirit" (*Come Celebrate!*, C-203).
- **Read or sing** "There is a balm in Gilead" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 676).
- **Listen** to "Blasphemous Rumours" on *Catching up with Depeche Mode* (or read an excerpt

WEAVINGS

- In earlier sessions in this module, the role of symbols in the Church was explored. This session emphasizes two symbols: oil and the laying on of hands. Oil, used for anointing the sick, was once considered a medicine. Now its powers are more symbolic. The laying on of hands symbolizes the power of God given through the Holy Spirit to his people.
- The word "unction" is a word rarely heard even in churches. Because of the way the Church used in the term at one time in history, many think that unction has to do with dying. The definition of unction is the act of anointing, something soothing or comforting.
- "Faith healers" can be found on television or radio on most Sundays. Compare their message to the healing service in *The Book of Common Prayer*. What is similar? What is different?

RESOURCE POSTER

- Sacramental Symbols (No. 4)

from page 2 of the Session Leaflet). The song is about an 18-year-old who was injured in a serious car accident. The song raises the dilemma of bad things that happen to good people even though God is good and all powerful. The song says, "God's got a sick sense of humor." Ask youth to find a better answer than the one in the song.

Service

- **Listening:** Ask a person trained in counseling to teach listening skills to the youth. Ask them to practice at home and at school. Plan a trip to a nursing home or the children's ward of a hospital for the youth to visit with the sick and try out their new listening skills.

Sharing

- Youth may wish to make additional bottle of oil and share them with members of the parish who suffer from arthritis or other joint and muscle disease. They might also use the same technique to make fragrant oils for cooking and sell them at a parish event, donating the money to a hospital or hospice.

Study

- **Rubrics:** In the BCP read the rubrics (or directions that are in smaller italic print) for the healing service beginning on page 453. Answer these questions: When is an illness serious enough to notify a priest? Why might a sick person want to say a general confession?

- **Uction:** Look up the word "unction" in a Bible dictionary. Explain what it means using your own words.

Voices

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

I don't want to start
Any blasphemous rumours
But I think that God's
Got a sick sense of humor
And When I die
I expect to find Him
"Blasphemous Rumors" from the
album *Catching up with Depeche
Mode*, Sire Records

All shall be well and all shall be
well and all manner of things
shall be well.

Julian of Norwich

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to page 460 of *The Book of Common Prayer* and read together the following prayer. (Session Leaflet, p. 3).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

May God the Father bless you, God the Son heal you, God the Holy Spirit give you strength. May God the holy and undivided Trinity guard your body, save your soul, and bring you safely to his heavenly country; where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

*For Health of Body and Soul
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 460*

Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.* laughing
People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are the youth more familiar with the service for Ministration to the Sick in *The Book of Common Prayer*? Can they pray for friend, relatives, and strangers who are sick?

Confirmation: Renewing Promises

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

This session will focus on Confirmation, God's call to make a mature commitment of Christian faith. The youth will be able to name significant turning points, such as confirmation, in their lives and to discuss how God supports them at those critical times. They will also be able to describe ways in which confirmation empowers people for service to others.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session centers on the rite of Confirmation. It is defined in *The Book of Common Prayer* as “the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop. The key words and ideas are “mature commitment” and “turning point.” Reflect on your own faith journey. Have you made a mature commitment to the Christian faith? What does that mean in your life?

Commentary

In the Early Church, before Constantine, confirmation and baptism occurred at the same time. A bishop would perform the baptism and, by laying on of hands, confirm the person, child or adult, admitting them to Holy Communion.

After the expansion of the Church the two rites became separate. Priests were given the right to baptize, and the bishop visited as soon as possible to confirm the newly baptized. From the late Middle Ages it became customary to confirm people at age twelve or older when

they reached “the age of understanding,” and could be admitted to Holy Communion.

The Book of Common Prayer, 1979 returns to the former theological belief that baptism is full initiation into the Church with admission to Holy Communion.

With this change in thinking where does the concept of confirmation play a roll? The answer lies in the statement concerning confirmation in the Catechism (BCP, p. 860). It “is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ.” When is a person ready to make this commitment? That question should be prayerfully considered by those involved.

Confirmation can be a real turning point in the lives of individuals. Preparation for this step involves a spiritual dimension as well as intellectual knowledge. An examination of the whole self in relation to God and the Church.

Confirmation requires that we are baptized, have had sufficient instruction in the Christian Faith, are penitent of our sins, and are ready to affirm our confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Personal Views

There are many differed views about readiness for confirmation and the preparation one needs to take this step. Leaders in the Church argue over what age a person should be confirmed. Many believe that confirmation should occur by age twelve or thirteen, in order to get young people before they leave the Church. Others

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Laying on of Hands* by Bobbi Tull
 - **Key Verse**—*But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, . . .* —Ephesians 4:15
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Madeleine L'Engle, Mark Twain, John Donne
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—Prayer for Reaffirmation (BCP, p. 419)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

Genesis 32: 24-30

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Turning points in the lives of youth may be painful experiences, such as divorce or death of a family member. They may also be the loss of a friend or failure in school. They may even be as serious as involvement in drugs and alcohol. Providing youth with a safe place to share these experiences is essential.
- Young people often have many questions about their faith and the faith of their families. Asking these questions is risky for than as they may feel disloyal or unworthy because they even ask the questions.
 - **Discussion Starter:** What are some of the turning points in your life? When have you felt strengthened by God's presence?

believe that young people themselves should decide. And still others think mature means adults.

Young people today face many challenges that were not a part of the lives of a generation earlier. Can confirmation be a way to strengthen them for the significant turning points in their lives? Confessing the Christian Faith during the teen years often has a profound effect on young lives. Some researchers have found that if teens are going to turn their lives over to God, they should do it before age 18.

Jacob wrestled with God and God blessed him. Young people are wrestling with issues of faith each day. As leaders in the Church we must provide safe places where young people can ask questions, give their opinions about issues, and share their thoughts and feelings about what is important to them. We need to be ready to listen and to support them as they seek to find their own answers and strengthen their own relationships with God.

God our Father, you see your children growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Young Persons
The Book of Common Prayer, p.829

Coming Together

(Time: 5-10 min)

Before youth arrive, place a very large stone, or other heavy object in

the center of the room. Ask the young people to pick up the stone without assistance and then with one other person. Which is easier?

When all are present select a lector and ask the youth to turn to Genesis 32: 24-30 in their Bibles. Read the following prayer together (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear Lord, Please help us to make the right decision to join the Church. Reassure us that the decision we are making is the right one. Forgive us for our doubts and unwillingness to accept the responsibilities of being a Christian. Help us to understand what your love does for us. Amen.

John, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Genesis chapter 32, verses 24 through 30.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 20 min)

Discuss how difficult it was to lift the stone without assistance and how much easier it was when someone helped. We often try to do things all by ourselves thinking we can be independent. We think we don't need anyone. We often do that with God, believing that it is we who accomplish tasks with no help.

Share the story of the man in the water after a shipwreck. The man prays to God to save him from death. "Please God," he prays, "send some one to rescue me." Soon a life boat is lowered into the water. The man gets in the boat and says, "Thanks any way God, but I don't need you any more."

For further discussion:

- Was this a turning point in the man's life?
- What are some turning points in your life?

- Have you ever found a solution to a problem that you hadn't considered before? Do you think God might have provided that solution?

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

- **Blessings:** God blessed Jacob and blesses us in many ways. Supply a variety of art materials such as paint, glitter, glue, ribbon, and other items. Invite the youth to create something that represents a blessing they have received from God.
- **Time-line:** Using paper and colored markers invite the youth to create a time-line of their lives. Ask them to illustrate the time-line with symbols or pictures that represent turning points, or significant events in their lives. Some suggestions are: moving, new school, met best friend, passed an important test, was accepted in a club, made the team, visited a special place. Finish the time-lines by circling in gold the events where God's presence was felt.

Games

- **Gaining wisdom:** Some people feel that to be mature is to gain wisdom. Wisdom can be gained by observing others closely. Seat the group in a circle and ask them to become wise by observing the leader. The leader leans forward opens arms and says, "I will not let you go until you bless me." Everyone will believe they can repeat the phrase. The catch is that the leader moves a hip off the

chair and puts it back down when saying bless me. The group can be distracted with other motions but no other motion except the hip movement should be repeated.

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 *Forest Gump*. Discuss with the group the various turning points and commitments Forest makes and the promises he keeps in spite of difficult odds.
- **Print:** Read *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry. Discuss the turning point each character makes and the commitment kept.

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 together "Go forth for God; go to the world in peace" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 347).
- Listen to "From a Distance" by Bette Midler.
- Listen to "River of Dreams" by Billy Joel.

Service

- **Taking on a challenge.** Talk about tasks or behaviors that are a challenge to do on a regular basis. This could mean anything from

WEAVINGS

- This session could be scheduled as part of the discernment process for youth who are considering confirmation.
- Youth make commitments in many aspects of their lives—in scouting, sports, school, to name a few—often not related to Church. Connections can be made between these commitments and service to God.
- Sometimes we forget that the word "confirmation" is used in other ways. The dictionary defines it as the act of validating or verifying something. In making airline reservations, sometimes we call "to confirm" or validate our information. The word can also mean the act of making something firmer or stronger. In the Church, confirmation takes on both meanings: validating and strengthening our faith.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Sacramental Symbols (No. 4)

walking the dog daily, to setting the table, playing with or helping out a younger sibling, or talking with someone who is from a different group at school. Ask each youth to choose a challenge to take on for a week or a month. During that time, invite the youth to write down and reflect on how it feels to carry out this task on a daily basis. Talk about the frustrations and rewards of such responsibility. Compare this with responsibilities and commitments such as confirmation.

Sharing

■ **Sharing blessings:** If the youth made the blessings creations in Expressions, display them where other members of the congregation can see them.

Study

■ **Biblical characters:** Read stories of biblical characters such as Jacob, David, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, the prodigal son, and Lydia. What happened to each of these people? What were the turning points in their lives? What commitments did they make? How was God present to each one?

Voices

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

So I end where I began
and once again I start
to learn that my disgrace
is ripped, is torn apart,
and mended by your grace.
Madeleine L'Engle

Faith is believing what you know
ain't so.
Mark Twain

The best knowledge that we
have of God here, even by faith,
is rather that he knows us, than
that we know him.
John Donne

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 419 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

Leader: *Let us pray.
Almighty and everliving God, let
your fatherly hand ever be over
these your servants; let your Holy
spirit ever be with them; and so lead
them in the knowledge and
obedience of your Word, that they
may serve you in this life, and dwell
with you in the life to come; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Prayer for Reaffirmation
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 419

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Were the youth able to identify turning points in their own lives? Could they define commitment and what it means to follow through? Were they able to relate this to confirmation?

Marriage: Promises to Keep

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

From the beginning God called people to live in positive, healthy relationships with one another. The sacrament of marriage is a gift from God in which a man and a woman promise to enter fully into a committed, life-long relationship of intimacy that reflects God's love. This session focuses on the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (BCP, p. 423) and the qualities youth identify in their own friendships that are also important in marriage. Youth will be able to compare characteristics of relationships they now have with those necessary for a stable and joyful marriage.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on marriage as a gift from God that reflects the spiritual relationship between God and humankind. Key ideas are promises and the ingredients of healthy relationships with others. Read through the marriage service (BCP, p. 423) to familiarize yourself with the language used in the promises couples make to each other before God and the church. Think about the meaning of these words in relation to your own experience of human relationships.

Commentary

The Bible presents marriage as a gift from God in which a man and a woman bind themselves to one another in a lifelong relationship of love. In the Old Testament the spiritual relationship between God and Israel is expressed in terms of a marriage or betrothal.

In the New Testament Jesus Christ is portrayed as the bridegroom and the Church as his bride. The love of Christ for the Church described in the New Testament is not something that “happens” like falling in love: it is a deliberate act that results in an ability to love even that which is unlovable in another person. This love, known by the Greek word “agape,” is undeserved, sacrificial, and forgiving. By accepting this gift from God, a person must also agree to the responsibility and hard work that grows out of it.

Jesus taught very little about marriage, although his visit to a wedding in Cana and his sayings on divorce make it clear that he honored marriage. He defines the Kingdom of God as a joyous wedding feast.

Marriage is a human response to God's act of love and grace and forms the deepest expression of love and commitment between a man and a woman that possesses a sacred character. Promises are made before God and in the presence of God's people. The community witnesses the marriage promises between two people and pledges to support the couple in their new relationship. Like every covenant in which God is a partner, the promises are permanent.

Youth are involved in many types of relationships in which promises, loyalty, and good communication are important. The ingredients that help them create and sustain their own relationships can help them understand the qualities needed in a healthy marriage.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art for the Liturgical Year* by Schmidt
 - **Key Verse**— . . . *So they are no longer two, but one flesh.*
—Mark 10:8b
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Erich Fromm, Anthony deMello, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Martin Luther
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—The Blessing of the Marriage (BCP, p. 431)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Jesus said to them, "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

Mark 10:6-8

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- In a time when many couples choose to live together before or instead of marriage, youth may have questions about the difference marriage makes in a relationship. Be prepared to discuss this in terms of the contrasts in levels of commitment between these two types of relationships.
- Many youth may live in single parent households. A thoughtful and gentle approach to marriage as a Christian ideal is essential. Be ready to balance the understanding of marriage as a positive ideal with the reality of a broken world in which many relationships do not survive.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you ever done anything that cost you a friendship? Was it intentional or unintentional?

Personal Views

Reflect on or write about your own view of marriage. In what ways have your ideas been influenced by the Church or the Bible? Many stories in the Bible show us that although the relationship between God and his people has not always been smooth, God has always remained faithful. How does this reflect the reality of human relationships like marriage? How can God's grace help people who experience difficult times in their relationships?

Think about important relationships in your own life, including marriage, friendships, and family ties. What is the most important factor in maintaining these relationships? Are there certain acts or words you try to avoid? Are you estranged from someone now? What would you have to do to "set things right" with this person?

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.* Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. *Amen.*

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Marriage prayers distinguish the various relationships in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 429 their lives.

Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

As the group assembles, ask each person to think about a promise they have made and, most important, kept. It can be a very

simple promise (such as taking out the trash) or a more complicated, involved commitment. Invite them to think about the reasons why they kept the promise(s) they made. Ask them to share these thoughts if they feel comfortable doing so.

Ask the youth to turn to Mark 10: 6-8 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read the following prayer together. (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.
Most wonderful God,
Thank you for creating an institution into which countless couples have entered into. Marriage can be a flame that burns bright even when all the other lights in the world have been dimmed. We thank you for your undying love and belief in us that allows us to go out into the world and unite with one other person who will strengthen our love for you by seeing you through their eyes. Amen.*

Kate, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, verses 6 through 8.*

(Full text on p. 2)

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

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

God calls us into different kinds of relationships with a variety of people, each one requiring different levels of commitment and devotion. This exercise is designed to help youth

distinguish the various relationships in their lives.

Place three sheets of newsprint around the classroom; each one with a different heading: What Makes a Good Friend, What Makes a Good Sister/Brother, and What Makes a Good Son/Daughter. The posters are intended to reflect the three primary relationships which youth experience.

Invite youth to write on each sheet of newsprint the characteristics that improve the relationships indicated by the heading.

When youth are finished writing, ask them to discuss the characteristics in the lists and why they are important in developing and keeping relationships. Encourage youth to relate stories to the group from their personal experiences. This can turn the discussion from the abstract to the concrete.

Ask several youth to read aloud the prayers said at the marriage service (BCP, p. 429). Invite youth to identify the characteristics in the prayers that match the characteristics on the newsprint. Which are common? Which are different? Which parts of the relationships they have now do they think might help couples in their marriages?

For further discussion: Ask youth to describe the kinds of commitment required in the following relationships: friends, siblings, child/parent, spouses. Which type of relationship is most important to them right now? Why? Which is the most difficult?

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

- **In search of:** Compose an ISO (in search of) similar to those found in local newspapers and magazines ads. Describe the qualities of the person you might like to marry someday. Read the ads aloud and then “post” them on a bulletin board or newsprint sheet entitled “In Search Of. . .”
- **Exchanging vows:** Read the vows printed in *The Book of*

Common Prayer, p. 427. Based on the discussion in the Engaging activity, ask the group to compose their own vows that include promises the youth feel are important for a good marriage.

- **Symbols:** The exchange of rings in the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage includes is a symbol of commitment and the complete equality of the man and woman. It is an optional gesture and other appropriate symbols may be exchanged. Ask the youth to design a symbol that reflects their relationship with a close friend.

Games

- **Trust walk:** Ask the youth to help you set up an obstacle course in the room, using chairs, tables, and other furniture. Divide the group into pairs. Blindfold one person in each pair. Ask the person who can see to lead his/her teammate through the room without bumping into anything in the obstacle course. Trade blindfolds and repeat. What did both people in each team have to do to get through the obstacle course successfully? What did you do right? What did you do wrong?

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 *The Princess Bride*, available at video stores.
- **Print:** Bring the Personal ads from a newspaper's classified ad

WEAVINGS

- The sacraments are described as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” (BCP, p. 857) The outward signs, in addition to the marriage itself, include the exchange of rings and other traditions. The inward grace is the willingness to love another person as God loves us.
- The dictionary defines vow as an “earnest promise or pledge” that binds a person to behave in a certain way. This word is usually used only in the context of important, solemn occasions: marriages, ordination, and so on. It is also used in the Old Testament when important agreements were made between God and the Israelites.
- It's difficult to talk about marriage without confronting the reality of divorce. Statistics show that half the marriages in the United States end in divorce. Although the Church holds marriage to be a permanent state, we also recognize the reality of the broken world we live in. God expects the Church to temper its teachings with compassion and love.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Sacramental Symbols (No. 4)

section. Ask the youth to find the most important qualities people are seeking. Compare these to qualities from the Engaging activity.

Music

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

- Learn "Covenant Hymn" in *Gather*, 571 (GIA Publications, Inc.).
- Read or sing "O God, to those who here profess their vows of life-long love" *The Hymnal 1982*, 352. Which verbs describe ways God can help marriages?
- Listen to "We've Only Just Begun" by *The Carpenters*.

Service

- **Promises to keep:** Make a promise to help an organization or person that requires a long-term commitment. For example, bring at least one food item a week for the church's food pantry for six months, or bake a casserole for the homeless shelter once a month for six months.

Sharing

- **Helping others:** Volunteer to provide child care or help out with household chores or yard work for a married couple in the church or community to allow them time together to build their relationship.

Study

- **Television:** Invite youth to think of television shows they like to watch which feature a married couple. How is marriage portrayed by the shows? Are these images of marriage realistic?
- **First-hand information:** Invite a couple from the church who have been married a long time to visit the group and talk about the things that keep a marriage growing in a positive and healthy way.

Voices

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

Love is an act of faith, and whoever is of little faith is also of little love.

Erich Fromm

"Do you think you will be able to give my daughter what she wants?" a man asked a suitor. "I certainly do, sir, She says that all she wants is me."

Anthony deMello

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance and is built on some of the same rules.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage.

Martin Luther

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing blessing and dismissal. Turn to page 431 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3) and read the following blessing.

Leader: *Let us pray.*

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. Amen.

The Blessing of the Marriage
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 431

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 kind of commitment required of Christian marriage? Can they describe the qualities of healthy relationships? Are they able to see similarities in the characteristics of their relationships and of marriages?

Ordination: God's Call

Sacraments of the Church

Objective

This session will focus on the rite of Ordination as God's call to serve in a particular way. Youth will be able to identify ways in which we are all called to serve God through our own unique gifts from God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session centers on the rite of Ordination. While a call by God and the community of faith to serve as a bishop, priest, or deacon is a particular ministry in the Church, the youth will be able to state that we all have a call to serve God according to the gifts God has given to us.

Commentary

According to the Catechism, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 855, "The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons." The ministry of a bishop is primarily to serve God as the chief pastor of a diocese. The ministry of a priest is to administer the sacraments and bless and declare pardon in God's name in a particular congregation or to a particular group of people. The ministry of a deacon is to serve those in need and to assist a priest or bishop.

The ministry of the lay person, actually the first ministry given, "is to represent Christ and his church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; . . ."

In the rites of Ordination for bishop, priest, or deacon, persons called to that ministry are asked to promise in the name of God that they will

perform the tasks assigned to their offices. Each has several things in common. All bishops, priests and deacons promise to be faithful in prayer and in the study of the Holy Scripture; to live a life that is an example of Christ's teachings by following the great commandment to love God above all others and to love our neighbors as ourselves; and to serve others in the name of God.

Individuals who are called by God and the Church to serve in these particular ministries are using the special gifts God has given them for ministry. God gives each one of us gifts and calls us to use those gifts in service to God, the Church, and the world.

Discovering the gift God has given each of us is the first step in accepting our own call to ministry. A gift is not defined by a particular talent or skill, though many people are blessed with those. A gift may be something we are particularly good at or enjoy doing, such as gardening or repairing automobiles. A gift may be a personal characteristic like the ability to make people smile, or being a good listener. A gift may be an experience that has affected our lives and helps us connect with the lives of others who have had similar experiences.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Stole*, Elizabeth Wolfe
 - **Key Verse**—*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, . . .*
—Ephesians 4:11
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Thomas More, Amy Carmichael, Winifred Holtby
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—For all Christians in their vocation (BCP, p. 256)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4:4-7; 11-13

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may have had an opportunity to attend an ordination or the installation of a new rector. You may wish to draw upon these experiences to reflect on the gifts for the ministry of clergy.
- Young people often believe that they do not have any particular gifts. It is part of the insecurity of adolescence and needs to be respected. At the same time you can help young people to discover for themselves the gifts they do have.
- **Discussion Starter:** What do you like to do the most? What do others compliment you about?

Personal Views

If you have ever attended an ordination service, you will know that they can be quite elaborate. The preparations involved often compare to those of a wedding. The celebration recognizes the unique gifts and calling of these individuals in service to God and the Church.

While it is important and right to recognize and respect the call of clergy, lay people must also recognize the place of call in their own lives. Scripture tells us that God calls each and every one of us to serve, not just as ushers and choir members in the church, but as people who live their lives in the world. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, it doesn't matter what work we do, as long as we do it for the glory of God.

Youth are at a stage of their development where they are defining their identity, seeking who they are as individuals, connected to yet separated from their families, and in relationship to God. It is important to their relationship to God that the Church provide a safe place for questioning and searching. As youth ask questions such as, "Who am I?" or "What do I want to be?", they need help exploring the possibilities available to them. The culture will emphasize wealth and success. The Church will emphasize service, self-fulfillment and peace.

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 25

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 235

Coming Together

(Time: 5-10 min)

Before youth arrive, write on strips of paper some gifts that you know the young people in your group have as well as some others they might not think they have. Examples: the traditional—sings, plays the piano, flute, trumpet, or other instrument; paints, sews, designs; is a good left guard, goalie, tennis player; good student, etc.; and the non-traditional—laughs easily, friendly to older people, likes children, listens to others, helps friends solve problems, cares for animals, enjoys nature.

Place the strips in a bowl or basket on a table. As the youth arrive, invite them to draw a strip from the pile. Instructions: If the gift fits keep it, if not give it to someone else.

Ask the youth to turn to Ephesians 4:4-7; 11-13 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read the following prayer together (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, you call priests to be ordained in your name. Help us to discover how you call each and every one of us. Give us a chance to hear that call and respond to it. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Amanda, Grade 9

Lector: *A reading from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4 verses 4 through 7 and 11 through 13.*

(Full text on p. 2)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 20-30 min)

On a chalk board or large sheet of paper write "I would like to be . . ." Underneath in a random manner write the following words: animal, place, car, flower, color. Ask the youth to use their imagination and write down their choices. (Example: I would like to be a

tiger, Chicago, a sunflower, a Jeep, and red.) Discuss their answers as a group or in pairs. Why did you make each selection? What do your choices say about gifts you may have? Write down those gifts. Think about how you might use those gifts in service to God.

For further discussion:

- What are some of the gifts of those who have been called to serve God in the Church as bishops, priests and deacons?
- How do those gifts compare with the gifts of other people you know?
- How can you use your gifts to praise God?

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

- **Scripture moods:** Provide the youth with colored pens and paper. Read aloud Ephesians 4: 4-7; 11-12. Invite the group to express in any way they wish—pictures, words, abstract forms—what they sense the apostle Paul is saying.
- **Collage:** Using pictures, words, and phrases from magazines, create a collage that represents all the gifts of the members of the class.

Games

- **Gift giving:** Using the gifts written on the strips of paper for the Coming Together activity, ask the youth to read the gifts they chose or were given. Have available additional blank strips of paper. Invite the youth to give a gift, either one they have or a new one

to every other person in the group. When everyone has had a chance to give a gift away, ask each person to state how they might use that gift in service to God.

- **Mind maps:** Divide the class into small groups or teams. For each team, write the name of a gift, such as “smiles a lot” in the middle of a large piece of construction paper. Ask each member of the group to draw a line from the gift and tell how that gift can be used to the glory of God. Give them a time limit, and ask them to come up with as many different ways as possible.

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 *The Cutting Edge* about call. Did Douglas know what his call might be when he was playing hockey? Did that change after his accident? How did he feel when he told his brother about his decision to try figure skating?
- **Print:** Read *The Rabbi's Gift* by Francis Dorff (from “New Catholic World” 222 [March-April 1979]: 53.) Discuss the gift given to the community. How can our gifts make a difference in the lives of others?

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

WEAVINGS

- This session could be scheduled at the beginning or end of the year when youth are making choices about courses for school.
- This session could be scheduled prior to a ministries fair to help youth find ways to serve in the church. Be sure youth will be welcome to join groups they may choose. If some activities are not open to youth, consider asking the rector or others in authority if policies might be changed.
- All diocese have a process that leads to ordination. Usually it begins with a period of discernment: the person must not only be called by God, but also by the community. Sometimes we don't apply the same process to decisions in our lives. The next time you are faced with a decision about a new ministry or job, let God and people who are close to you have some input. We don't have to face anything alone.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Sacramental Symbols (No. 4)
- The Rabbi's Gift, Panel 3, (No. 6)

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 together “’Tis the gift to be simple” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554).
- Sing “Jacob’s Ladder Sequel” in *Listening Hearts Songbook*, p. 3.
- Sing “Kum by Ya” putting in the gifts of the youth in the “Some-one’s _____, Lord” verse.

Service

- **Serving all persons:** The need for volunteers in communities is very great. Encourage youth to volunteer their time in a community project that would help others. They may be more comfortable doing so in groups rather than alone.

Sharing

- **Telling others:** Invite the youth to share their collage of gifts with the parish. Or, have the youth write gifts on slips of paper and give them to members of the parish saying we appreciate your gift to God.

Study

- **Ordination:** Invite the youth to study the ordination services for bishop, priest, and deacon. Compare the three versions. Plan a service for one of the three, what would be meaningful for youth in such a service?

- **Personality Type:** Explore using some of the instruments for determining personality types, such as Meyers-Briggs or Kiersey-Bates. Be sure the youth understand that these are not definitive and are not designed to put people in boxes or categories. They can, however, be useful in identifying individual gifts.

Voices

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

The things, good Lord, that we pray for,
Give us grace to work for,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Thomas More

Holy Spirit
think through me
till your ideas
are my ideas.
Amy Carmichael
(Anglican missionary)

God give me work
Till my life shall end,
And life
Till my work is done.
Winifred Holtby

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to page 256 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3) and read the prayer together.

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

For all Christians in their vocation
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 256

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Were the youth able to claim gifts for themselves? Were they able to identify gifts in others? Could they see how their gifts might be used in service to God?