

# Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

## **WITNESSES IN THE WORLD** Leader's Guide



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*Developed by*  
Virginia Theological Seminary  
Center for the Ministry of Teaching  
3737 Seminary Road  
Alexandria, VA 22304

Amelia J. Gearey Dyer, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief

Dorothy S. Linthicum, Managing Editor

George J. Kroupa, III, Associate Editor

Consultants for *Witnesses in the World*  
The Rev. Anthony Clark  
The Rev. John Palarine

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Teaching Youth in Episcopal Churches ..... | 1  |
| Understanding Younger Youth .....          | 3  |
| Who Are Leaders?.....                      | 9  |
| The Episcopal Curriculum for Youth .....   | 12 |
| Using the Curriculum .....                 | 14 |
| Witnesses in the World.....                | 15 |

### WITNESSES IN THE WORLD: SESSION TITLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Perpetua: Christ or Caesar.....          | 17 |
| Clare of Assisi: Simplifying Life .....  | 21 |
| Martyrs of Memphis: Sacrifice .....      | 25 |
| Terry Waite: Captive for Christ.....     | 29 |
| Taize: Unity and Reconciliation .....    | 33 |
| C. S. Lewis: Presenting the Gospel ..... | 37 |
| Le Chambon: Helping Strangers.....       | 41 |
| Desmond Tutu: Fighting Racism.....       | 45 |
| L'Arche: Welcoming the Disabled .....    | 49 |

# 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.

## **WITNESSES IN THE WORLD**

The content of this module focuses on the lives of people in the faith community as they struggle to discover, "Who and Whose we are?" It tells of stories of people from the Early Church and people today who have dedicated their lives to do God's work in the world. *Witnesses in the World*, examines the lives of Perpetua and her companions who died for their faith, as well as organizations such as Taize or L'Arche, communities that are living their faith. Youth are being asked to respond to God's call in their lives. While this can be an individual decision to follow Christ, such a decision is often made in community. Discovering communities and individuals who have stood strong in their faith and lived out the promises of the Baptismal Covenant, is the hoped for outcome of this course of study.

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

### **For Teachers**

- **Leader's Guide** (this volume)  
Contains 9 sessions of material. The sessions are:  
*Perpetua: Christ or Caesar*  
*Clare of Assisi: Simplifying Life*  
*Martyrs of Memphis: Sacrifice*

*Terry Waite: Captive for Christ*  
*Taize: Unity and Reconciliation*  
*C. S. Lewis: Presenting the Gospel*  
*Le Chambon: Helping Strangers*  
*Desmond Tutu: Fighting Racism*  
*L'Arche: Welcoming the Disabled*

■ **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

*Witnesses in the World-Younger Youth*  
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# Perpetua: Christ or Caesar

## Witnesses in the World

### Objective

The focus of this session is martyrdom and bearing witness to the Christian faith. Youth will be able to define a martyr as a witness and name ways their lives can be influenced by the lives of the martyrs.

### Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on persecution and martyrdom in the early Church. The key name is Perpetua, key words are martyrs (witnesses) and martyrdom, and the key idea is the reason for Roman persecution against Christians. For spiritual preparation think about your feelings about witnessing to your faith in Jesus Christ today as discussed in the Personal Views.

### Commentary

Perpetua and her companions were martyred for their faith under the rule of Emperor Septimius Severus early in the third century. The Emperor demanded that all Roman citizens offer sacrifice to the divinity of the emperor. Perpetua and her companions refused on the grounds that they worshiped only one Lord, Jesus Christ. Perpetua's fate was sealed when she confessed to the proconsul, "I am a Christian."

After a miserable imprisonment she and her friends were sent to the Carthage arena to be mangled by a leopard, boar, bear and savage bull. Eventually, all were put to death by a stroke of a sword through the throat. The anniversary of their martyrdom is commemorated on March 7 in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*.

Contrary to popular belief, Christians did not experience constant persecution under Roman authorities in the early Church. Persecution came in waves and centered on offering worship to Caesar or Christ. Refusing to worship the divinity of the emperor—ascribing ultimate authority to him and not Christ—usually ended in torture and death. Christians were not encouraged to seek martyrdom nor were they to avoid it if their faith was at stake.

Those who made the ultimate testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ became known as martyrs or witnesses. They were seen as heroic examples and testimonies to God's power and grace for a Church often under persecution. The martyr's blood bore fruit as the Gospel continued to spread.

Constantine's assent to power and his Edict of Milan in 313 made Christianity the favored religion in the Roman empire and persecutions ceased. Once considered enemies of the state for their "subversive" attitudes (worshiping only Christ instead of many local gods), Christianity became the mainstream religion in the Roman empire.

**For further study refer to:** *Fox's Book of Martyrs*.

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### SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Perpetua in the Arena*, Bobbi Tull
  - **Key Verse**—*Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.*  
—I Peter 3: 15b-16a
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Perpetua, Emily Dickinson, Socrates, Albert Schweitzer
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—Of a Martyr (BCP, p. 246)
-

## LECTOR'S TEXT

*As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say the Elijah must come first?" He said to them, "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."*

Mark 9:9-13

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Young people may have a difficult time shifting from Perpetua's martyrdom to witnessing today. Being a witness for Christ may not require our death but often requires taking a stand and making a sacrifice. Look for concrete ways to show young people that witnessing to our Christian faith is possible in a modern world.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you ever been in a position in which you had to stand up for someone or something? What was that like?

## Personal Views

Wearing the shoes of Perpetua and other martyrs may be difficult for American Episcopalians. Attending church, Sunday school and youth group is a common event for many, and our lives are rarely, if ever, threatened for professing our faith. The challenge in discussing Perpetua and martyrdom is broadening our definition of martyrdom from dying for our faith to witnessing to our faith.

Martyrs witness to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. That makes many Christians uncomfortable. Faith is a private affair; telling others about faith and hope in Jesus Christ seems invasive and presumptive. Perhaps we are also afraid of the "persecution" we might face: whispers at the office, being labeled a fanatic, and perhaps losing friends. We don't want to be a caricature similar to street-corner preachers and door-to-door missionaries.

Perhaps Perpetua's time was much simpler. Caesar or Christ. Life or death. Today we can profess Christ and Caesar and yet struggle in the more subtle arenas for martyrdom: school, work or playground. Perpetua challenges us to make a "good confession of the faith" and offer "our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto [God]." (BCP, p. 336) Where is God be calling you to be a "martyr" for Christ today?

O God, you have called your people to your service from age to age. Do not give us over to death, but raise us up to serve you, to praise you, and to glorify your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Service for All Hallow's Eve  
*The Book of Occasional Services*, p. 107

## Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Set the room up like a television studio. If possible, borrow a video camera and tripod or make a fake camera by painting a small box black. As young people enter, give them a card that describes the character they will play in the Engaging exercise (i.e. the new president, the camera person, the interviewer, a mother of three who faces execution, a businessman, and others).

When everyone is present, ask the group to turn to Mark 9:9-13 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer. (Session Leaflet, p. 2)

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Dear Lord, help us to understand the sacrifice Christian martyrs endured to worship you. Give us the courage to follow in their footsteps to the best of our abilities. Help us confront everyday situations with the same self-sacrifice as the martyrs. Thank you, Lord, for showing us how to be witnesses for Christ. Amen.*

John, Grade 9

**Lector:** *A reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 9, verses 9 through 13.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time 15-20 min)

Tell the story of Perpetua and her companions. Then present this situation to the class: The year is 2024. A new U.S. president, N. E. Rowe, controls the government and demands total allegiance. The president has prohibited all Christian worship and gatherings because many churches opposed his rise to power. Several groups have continued to meet secretly. One meeting is raided and many are arrested. They can be released if they

denounce Christ and declare complete loyalty to the new president. Most refuse and are declared traitors. Just before their execution, Ted Koppel, Jr. interviews them. What do they say?

Encourage the group to get into the parts they were given during the Coming Together activity. If you plan to film the interviews, you may wish to rehearse.

#### **For further discussion:**

- How did it feel to stand up for your beliefs?
- We don't face life and death situations like Perpetua, but we do face the ridicule and ostracism of our friends. How can you be a witness for Christ with your friends?

### **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**

- **Brainstorming:** Brainstorm opportunities youth might have each day to be a witness for Christ. Encourage concrete examples. Write down their responses on butcher paper with markers. For example, if someone suggests "school," ask for specific situations. If they have a chance to cheat on a test, what will they do?
- **Backdrop:** Using paint or markers, make a backdrop for the Engaging activity. Where would the scene take place?
- **Stained Glass:** Display Resource Poster No. 2 of the Martyrs' Window. Point out the depiction of Perpetua. Provide black markers, crayons, and white tissue paper.

Ask youth to design a "stained glass" of a modern martyr or witness.

#### **Games**

- **Fact or fiction:** Divide the class into two or more teams. Give each team a card that says "Fact" and a card that says "Fiction." Read the statements from Panel 1 of Resource Poster No. 6. Explain that these accusations may have been made against early Christians like Perpetua. After each statement is read, give the teams time to "huddle" before coming to a decision. When you say "Fact or Fiction," the groups must hold up the card they have chosen.

#### **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 *Chariots of Fire*, especially the scene in which Eric Littell, a Scottish runner and devoted Christian, refuses to run a heat on a Sunday. The English Olympic committee asks him to put crown and country before God. Would you have made the same decision?
- **Print:** Gather different news magazines over a period of time. Ask youth to look for stories of people giving something up for something or someone they believe in.

#### **Music**

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

### **WEAVINGS**

- As your group studies and discusses other martyrs in this module, compare and contrast their situations and the decisions they faced.
- A witness is someone who has seen or heard something or one who furnishes evidence. Before we can be a witness for Christ we must listen to his words through study and prayer.
- In some parts of the world, people still face persecution because of their beliefs. For example, Christians in Turkey do not enjoy the same rights as Moslems. As we think about martyrs from the past, we should also remember today's martyrs and witnesses.

### **RESOURCE POSTER**

- Martyr's Window (No. 2)
- Fact or Fiction Game (Panel 1, No. 6)

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 “You are called to tell the story” in *Gather*, GIA Publications, Inc., 487.
- Read or sing “Let us now our voices raise” in *The Hymnal 1982*, 237.
- Listen to a recording of “Sounds of Silence” by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel.

### Service

- **Free gift:** Serving others in the name of Christ can be a powerful witness for the Gospel. Encourage the youth to think about gifts they could give to the community, such as a free car wash for volunteers at a homeless shelter or free lemonade for children at a park.

### Sharing

- **Showtime!** Show the video made during the Engaging activity to another group in church. Encourage youth to lead a discussion after the tape is shown about being witnesses in the world.

### Study

- **Reading:** Read the story about Perpetua and her companions in *Fox's Book of Martyrs*. Report to the group interesting details you discovered about Perpetua and the time in which she lived.
- **Viewing:** Watch the reenactment of Perpetua's imprisonment on tape that is part of “From Christ to Constantine: The Trial and Testimony of the Early Church,” a complete video curriculum available through Christian History, Inc. (P.O. Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490, 1-800-523-0226).
- **Dictionary:** Look up the word martyr in a Bible dictionary. What figure in the New Testament is known as a martyr? What is another translation for this word?

### Voices

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

Stand fast in the faith and love one another. And do not let what we suffer be a stumbling block.  
Perpetua  
(to her companions before her death)

Parting is all we know of heaven,  
And all we need of hell.  
Emily Dickinson

Nothing can harm a good person,  
either in life or after death.  
Socrates

Here, Lord, is my life.  
I place it on the altar today.  
Use it as you will.  
Albert Schweitzer

### Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 246 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. (Session Leaflet, p. 3) Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.  
Almighty God, who gave your servants Perpetua and her Companions boldness to confess the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ before the rulers of this world, and courage to die for this faith: Grant that we may always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us, and to suffer gladly for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Of a Martyr  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 246

**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 see martyrdom as witnessing for Christ? Do they understand that being a “martyr” does not necessarily mean dying for your faith? Can youth identify opportunities for martyrdom at school, home, and play?

# Clare of Assisi: Simplifying Life Witnesses in the World

## Objective

The objective of this session is to introduce youth to the simplicity of life professed by Jesus and Clare. Youth will be able to describe ways they can simplify their lives and be better stewards of God's gifts.

## Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on Clare's leadership of the "Poor Ladies of St. Damian" and their monastic rule of poverty, chastity and obedience. Key names are Francis of Assisi and Clare of Assisi; a key phrase is mendicant orders. For spiritual preparation reflect on your feelings about material wealth and how it may limit our relationship with God.

## Commentary

Francis of Assisi abandoned his family's business and relinquished his inheritance to found the mendicant order of Franciscans in 1212. Mendicant means depending on alms for a living, beggars. As mendicant monks, the Franciscans relied totally on the generosity of others for food, clothing, and often shelter.

Early in Francis' ministry an eighteen-year-old woman named Clare heard Francis preaching and decided to commit herself to the Lord by taking on the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The night she left home to join Francis, she wore her finest clothes. She traded her shining silk gown for a rough woolen robe, similar to those the brothers wore. She also gave over her jeweled belt for a piece of knotted rope.

Clare's family was wealthy and powerful in the community. They did

not want her to do this. Her relatives went to the convent to bring Clare home. As they tried to drag Clare away by force, she clung to the altar. Later, her mother and two sisters would join Clare in her vows.

Clare soon became the leader of an order of other like-minded women at the Church of St. Damian in Assisi in Italy. The order became known as the "Poor Ladies of St. Damian" or the "Poor Clares" and is still active today throughout the world and various denominations.

Clare insisted on strictly following the vow of poverty. She believed that material possessions often become our "gods" and distract us from the one true God revealed in Jesus Christ.

For further study **refer to:** *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, and *Francis and Clare, The Complete Works*, from *The Classics of Western Spirituality Series*.

## Personal Views

The value we ascribe to wealth—money, property, possessions—can reveal a great deal about our personal faith, spirituality, and relationship with the Lord. Perhaps that is why so many of Jesus' parables talk about money and wealth. He knew money was a "hot issue." It is an even hotter issue today.

In the relatively affluent society of the United States of America, we tend to see others through our own eyes or the eyes of the media—

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clare of Assisi*, Dorothy Linthicum
  - **Key Verse**—*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* —Luke 12:34
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Meister Eckhart, Shakespeare, Simone Weil
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—For stewardship of creation (BCP, p. 259)
-

## LECTOR'S TEXT

*"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*  
Luke 12:32-34

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Most youth do not consider themselves "wealthy." At the same time, few are actually hungry with no place to live. Help the youth recognize their wealth—being able to go to the movies, having new clothes, eating at fast food restaurants. What would they be willing to give up?
- Be clear that wealth is not a bad thing. Wealthy people have given the world a great deal through religious institutions and the arts. It is only when wealth separates people from God and each other that it becomes evil.
- **Discussion Starter:** If you joined an order as Clare did, what part of your life or your possessions would be the most difficult to give up?

magazines, television, movies. In this picture everyone has shelter, food, cars, televisions, and clothing.

This is a distorted view, for in America today, one-third of the people live in poverty, having to make decisions about getting medical care or paying the rent. Many people are unemployed, with factories closing and businesses downsizing. Thousands of others live in the streets or in shelters for the homeless.

Clare not only took the vow of poverty herself, she also worked to take care of the poor. Those who joined her made clothing for the poor and provided food and shelter for them whenever they could, often doing without these items themselves.

The emphasis on poverty by Francis and Clare and others reminds us of our "material world's" tendency to replace the Lord with idols. On a scale of one to ten, where would you rate your trust and reliance on the Lord? Do you see a relationship between the two scales? Most of us are not called to Clare's poverty. Perhaps our struggle is more difficult, as we try to support our families and way of life without surrendering ourselves to wealth's control.

*O God, whose blessed Son became poor that we through his poverty might be rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that we, inspired by the devotion of your servant Clare, may serve you with singleness of heart, and attain to the riches of the age to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, p. 305

## Coming Together

(Time : 10 min)

Using a shoe box, cut a slot in the top and write "POOR BOX" on the top. As the youth arrive, invite them to write on a piece of paper something they think poor people need and place it in the box. Discuss what it would be like to be poor.

When everyone is present, ask the group to turn to Luke 12:32-34 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer. (Session Leaflet, p.2)

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Dear God, in her life Clare made many sacrifices for you. Help us to dedicate our lives to your name and to make our own sacrifices. Even though our losses may not be as great as those of Clare, understand that we love you no matter what.*

Amanda, Grade 9

**Lector:** *A reading from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 12, verses 32-37.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Tell the story of Clare and Francis, people who really gave up everything to follow God. What would you give up?

Provide several (at least six) "hand-size and tossable" items that represent a youth's world: perhaps a cellular phone, a wallet, a calculator, car keys, a stuffed animal. Gather the groups in a circle and explain they will be performing a group juggle with a few ground rules. The participants must develop a pattern and repeat the pattern—no side to side allowed. The objects must be tossed across the circle. Start with one item, establish the pattern and gradually add more items to the juggle.

After the group juggles all the items or the juggling becomes chaos, stop

exercise and ask the following, or similar, questions:

- How did you feel juggling one item?
- How did you feel as the number of items increased?
- How did you feel when the juggling pattern broke down and items hit the floor?
- In what way does this juggling exercise reflect our lives?
- What items in our lives usually get dropped?
- How well do you juggle your relationship with the Lord and all the items in your life?

Encourage young people to discuss what is really valuable between the items and why. What could they live without, what is indispensable?

### Optional Activities

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

### Expressions

- **Poetry:** Invite youth to write a poem, either in rhyme or free verse, expressing their view of the poor and or poverty in their towns or the world.

### Games

- **Fire, flood, earthquake:** Sit in a circle around the room. Take turns yelling, "Fire," "Flood," or "Earthquake." After "Fire" is called everyone must go around the room and name something they will save if their house was on fire. Repeat with flood and earthquake; the responses may change.

### 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 Home of Our Own*, a movie about a family making do with very little.
- **Print:** Read portions of *Homecoming* by Cynthia Voigt, a story about three children who travel on their own, walking most of the way from Connecticut to Maryland. Focus on what was necessary for the trip.

### 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.

- Examine the words of "Take my life, and let it be" in *The Hymnal 1982*, 707.
- Sing together "Lord, I want to be a Christian" from *Songs for Celebration*, Church Hymnal Series IV, 322.
- Madonna's earlier hit "Material Girl" reflects today's values. Compare these with Clare's.

### Service

- **For the poor:** Using the "Poor Box" from the Coming Together activity, pull out the strips and look at the items the youth have written. Organize suggestions

### WEAVINGS

- This session could be taught in conjunction with the Feast of St. Clare on August 11 or St. Francis on October 4. (See *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*.)
- Many Roman Catholic orders still require a vow of poverty from those who join their ranks. Members of these orders, including the Franciscans of which Clare was a founder, give all their possessions to the Church and live very austere lives. God doesn't call everyone to a life of poverty; God does expect us, however, to rid ourselves of things that separate us from God.
- The idea of begging, as the mendicant orders of the Poor Clares did, is repugnant to most of us. However, the act of begging gives others the opportunity to share their wealth. A CEO of a large company in a busy city once said she always gave money to beggars. "I don't give it for them as much as I give it for myself."

### RESOURCE POSTER

- Exemplars' Window (no. 5)

into workable tasks. Open up the discussion for suggestions not included in the box. Find ways that the young people might be able to carry out the suggestions.

## Sharing

- **Information:** Help the youth gather information about various ministries in the church that serve the poor—a clothes closet or food bank, a shelter ministry. Make an attractive display to inform other members of the congregation about these ministries.

## Study

- **Stewardship:** Research the concept of stewardship both in the Church and in the world. Find out about the *Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief*. What is it? Who does it help?
- **Read:** Find a book such as *Butler's Lives of the Saints* and read about Francis and Clare. What other saints took vows of poverty?
- **View:** Watch the film *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* about the life of St. Francis.

## Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 3):

I have often said that those who seek God while seeking other things will never find God.

Meister Eckhart (adapted)

My friends were poor but honest.

Shakespeare

We only possess what we renounce.

Simone Weil

## Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 259 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.*

*O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that*

*we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

For stewardship of creation  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 259

**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 grasp the idea of true poverty whether voluntary or not? Did this seem to be their first encounter with money verses faith? How much of their identity is connected to what they own or possess? Can they identify ways to simplify their lives and to be better stewards of God's gifts?

# Martyrs of Memphis: Sacrifice Witness in the World

## Objective

The objective for this lesson is to explore “laying down” one’s life for another. Youth will examine the way people in different professions—physicians, nurses, firefighters, police officers and soldiers—put their lives on the line on a daily basis. Youth will be able to see how faith in God can help people accomplish seemingly impossible tasks.

## Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on circumstances surrounding the Martyrs of Memphis and their willingness to lay down their lives for the sick. The key date is August 1878; a key name is Constance; key places are Memphis and Tennessee; and the key event is the Yellow Fever epidemic. For spiritual preparation think about modern epidemics and your willingness to lay down your life for another.

## Commentary

Yellow fever struck Memphis, Tennessee in August of 1878 for the third time in ten years. Five nuns of the Angelica order of St. Mary, Constance, Theola, Amelia, Hughetta, and Ruth, shifted their attention from administering a boarding school for girls to caring for the hundreds of fever-stricken and dying people left in the city. The sisters were seasoned veterans of yellow fever: they had survived the epidemic of 1873.

In the 1878 outbreak, death tolls averaged 200 a day. When the epidemic subsided in the fall of 1878, over 5,000 people had died, including

Constance, the other sisters, and two Episcopal priests, the Reverends Charles Parsons and Louis Schuyler.

The chances of another epidemic of that proportion are slight in the United States today, thanks to modern hygiene and sanitation practices. The mosquito breeding grounds, the bayous and swamps, and the lax sanitation practices of 19th century Memphis are uncommon in developed countries. Epidemics and infections are still a threat, however, in many places in Africa, Asia, India and South/Central America. Health care professionals in these areas still risk their lives in treating the sick and dying. In our country, many believe that HIV/AIDS represents the most serious threat to health care professionals. Perhaps HIV/AIDS is the modern day “yellow fever.”

**For further study refer to:** “Martyrs of Memphis”, in the *Anglican Digest*, Transfiguration 1994.

## Personal Views

Improved sanitation and hygiene practices have virtually eliminated the threat of yellow fever in the United States. Health care professionals today, however, face a risk of contracting other contagious diseases such as Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS. Consider your last visit to the hospital or dentist; how have precautions changed? From a health-care perspective, consider your own stereotypes, fears and

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*The Nun*, by Dorothy Linthicum
  - **Key Verse**—*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.* John 15:13
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Sister Constance, II Corinthians
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—**For Constance and her Companions** (*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, p. 329)
-

## LECTOR'S TEXT

[Jesus said to his disciples,] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another".

John 15:12-17

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Bringing up the topic of HIV/AIDS may sidetrack younger youth from the main focus of the lesson: the Martyrs of Memphis and the thousands of men and women who are willing to lay down their lives for others on a daily basis. Be ready to steer the discussion away from fears and stereotypes of this disease and the people who have it.
- Encourage youth to share stories about people who take risks for others from their own experiences or from stories they have read or seen.
- **Discussion Starter:** If you had lived in Memphis when the yellow fever returned, would you have left or stayed behind?

prejudices regarding HIV/AIDS.

Move the Martyrs of Memphis to the 20th century. Would they be willing to risk their lives in caring for HIV/AIDS patients who sometimes contract the disease because of "questionable" life styles? The Missionaries of Charity, under the authority of Mother Teresa, today, in our country, care for many AIDS patients who have no other place to go.

What other people work in professions in which they are willing to lay down their lives for others on a daily basis? If you work in such a profession—firefighter, police officer, soldier—what motivates you to risk your life for others? What role does faith play in doing this kind of work? If you don't serve in such a profession, "walk a mile in their shoes." Consider their motivation and the place of faith in their work.

We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God;. . .

That it may please you to inspire us, in our several callings, to do the work which you give us to do with singleness of heart as your servants, and for the common good,

*We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

That it may please you to preserve all who are in danger by reason of their labor or their travel,

*We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

(From) The Great Litany  
*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 151*

## Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Decorate a bulletin board or make a collage with magazine pictures of those willing to lay down their lives for another. As youth enter the room, ask them to identify

the professions illustrated in the pictures. Tell them to think about people they know in the church or community who work at one of these jobs.

When all are present ask youth to find John 15:12-17 in their Bibles. Select a lector read together the youth prayer (p. 2 of the Session Leaflet).

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Now I lay me down to sleep*

*I pray to God my soul to keep.*

*If I die before I wake,*

*I pray to God my soul to take.*

*The more I trust, the more I believe,*

*that I should not hurt or deceive.*

*Although sometimes I feel I'm being used,*

*but rather that than be abused.*

*You give me a gift, whenever I need,*

*Show me the gift I should feed.*

Michael, Grade 8

**Lector:** *A reading from the Gospel according to John, chapter 15, verses 12 through 17.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Tell the youth the story of the Martyrs of Memphis, using the information in the Commentary.

Read the key verse (John 15:13) and ask youth to come up with a list of the professions in which people lay down their lives for others. Brainstorm and list the specific dangers that accompany each profession. For example, physicians and nurses risk infection from needle sticks and cuts. Ask why a person would be willing to work in a "risky" profession. Is financial compensation a factor in all or some professions? How would their faith in God affect their choice of a profession and their attitude towards it? How might a "risky" profession be ministry? Encourage youth to see the opportunities for ministry and service to God in any vocation, whether it is risky or ordinary.

After discussing risky vocations, ask the youth to name the top three professions they would like to know more about, such as groups of nurses, smoke jumpers, or police officers. Plan a strategy to “adopt” one or more of these groups to provide regular prayer support. The group can also write notes of encouragement and appreciation to individuals in the group. If there is interest, encourage some of the youth to contact the groups to find other things the youth could do to support people who are putting their lives on the line.

### 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

- **Writing:** Compose “prayers of the people” dedicated to those who lay down their lives for others. Consider different vocations and the special grace or blessing each may need from the Lord.
- **Letters:** Imagine yourself as a young member of Sister Constance's order. Write a letter to your family from Memphis describing the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 and the last days of the Martyrs of Memphis.
- **Drawing:** Because photography was still not widely used in 1878, magazines and newspapers often used artists' sketches. Try to picture a hospital ward in Memphis, and make a sketch that could be used in a magazine.

### Games

- **“What’s My line?”** Write the names of different “risky” professions on 3" x 5" cards before class. Assign a role to each student and allow the rest of the class ten “yes” or “no” questions to guess the vocation. Questions must be indirect, such as, “Are you someone I would know?” Questions cannot be specific, such as, “Do you fight fires?” A variation of this game is to tape the cards on the back of each youth. The youth circulate, asking questions to discover their vocations.

### 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 movie *The Cure*, a story about two teens seeking a cure for AIDS.
- **Print:** Bring in news magazines and ask youth to look for stories of people who have risked their lives for others. Sometimes people did not choose a risky profession, but found themselves in risky situations any way. Would you risk your life for a stranger?

### 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

## WEAVINGS

- Compare the Martyrs of Memphis with the other martyrs and witnesses discussed in this module. Consider similarities and differences. What makes the Martyrs of Memphis unique in the roll call of the faithful (Hebrews 11:32-38)?
- The word “martyr” is often associated with those who have been put to death because of their beliefs. The word also means to endure great suffering on behalf of any belief, principle, or cause. The Martyrs of Memphis suffered great pain and eventual death to ease the suffering of others.
- The media often report stories about people taking incredible risks to save the lives of strangers. In the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, rescue workers went into the shattered building again and again to look for survivors. Include those who take risks for others in your prayers this week.

## RESOURCE POSTER

- Martyrs Window (No. 2)

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 “Fight the good fight with all thy might” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 552). How is Christ “our strength”?
- Sing “Amazing Grace,” a hymn about one who has seen great suffering.
- Play a recording of “Bridge Over Troubled Waters” by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel.

### Service

- **Team up:** Find a way for youth to observe a “risky” profession. Team them with people in health care, the military, or other professions.
- **Volunteer:** Encourage youth interested in health professions to volunteer at local hospitals in various capacities. Ask a volunteer coordinator from a community hospital to talk to the group about service opportunities.

### Sharing

- **Prayers of the People:** Share the “Prayers of the People” composed for the Expression activity during Sunday worship.

### Study

- **Library:** Visit the library to learn about other people who have fought epidemics around the world. Find out how they became involved in this pursuit.

- **Helping others:** Find out about other religious orders in the United States today whose purpose is to help others, especially those who have the least. Call the diocesan office in charge of social ministry and the community Catholic charity organization.
- **Yellow fever:** Find out more about yellow fever and why Memphis was susceptible to the disease. Were there outbreaks of the disease in other parts of the world or during other time periods?

### Voices

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

I found two families—all down with the fever—who had been without a nurse for two days—one for three. They had crawled about in their misery, and helped each other. The hearses go by constantly without a single mourner - the poor are thrown into pine boxes, and buried by dozens.

Sister Constance

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

II Corinthians 1:3-5

### Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 329 of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (p. 4 of the Session Leaflet). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.*

*We give you thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the heroic witness of Constance and her companions, who, in time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death. Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

For Constance and her Companions  
*Lesser Feast and Fasts*, p. 329

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

### Look For

Can youth see opportunities to lay down their lives for another through different vocations and roles? Are they able to connect faith in God with concrete avenues of service?

# Terry Waite: Captive for Christ

## Witnesses to the World

### Objective

The objective of this session is to examine what it is like to be held captive for a significant time and the “coping skills” necessary for survival. Youth will be able to recall important memories and meaningful scripture stories that would comfort them in captivity and to begin to cultivate “a spirit that can never be chained.”

### Background for Leaders

The Commentary focuses on the story of Terry Waite's captivity in Lebanon from 1987 to 1991 and how he dealt with his crisis of faith. Ideas in the Personal Views will help you reflect on times in your life when you have had doubts about your faith.

### Commentary

Terry Waite, a special envoy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, was captured by terrorists on January 20, 1987 in Beirut, Lebanon. Waite, a Church of England lay person, was on a special mission to seek the release of three Western hostages: Terry Anderson, Tom Sutherland and John McCarthy. In similar situations around the world, Waite had shown unique gifts of conciliation and trust. More than once he had placed himself in jeopardy in an attempt to resolve differences without violence. This time he was captured.

After over four years of solitary confinement, frequent illness, several beatings, restricted communication and occasional contact with the other hostages, Waite was released from captivity in November of 1991. His companions during his imprison

ment included a magnifying glass, blindfold, Bible, *Book of Common Prayer*, an occasional novel, his memories, and his faith.

Terry Waite “wrote” his autobiography, *Taken on Trust*, while a hostage. He spent many hours while a captive recalling his childhood, young adult years and his lay ministry with The Church of England around the world. The discipline of organizing his memoirs helped him to remember the events and people who gave his life meaning. His daily routine included exercise, recitation of the communion service and prayers for himself, his family and his captors. His Christian faith was tested, doubted and strengthened during his confinement. Although confined and often chained, Waite refused to let his mind and spirit be chained.

**For further study refer to:** *Terry Waite: Taken on Trust*, his autobiography.

### Personal Views

Most of us will never face an imprisonment as Terry Waite did. We will, however, face “a dark night of the soul” where our faith, values and sheer willingness to live may be tested. This dark night may come with the death of a friend or loved one, a severe illness, or perhaps divorce. Will we have the spiritual and mental strength to survive the captivity?

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—David Hartman, Impact Visuals
  - **Key Verse**—*He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.”* —Luke 12:22-23
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Terry Waite, Holocaust victim
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—For those who suffer for the sake of Conscience (BCP, 823)
-

## LECTOR'S TEXT

He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. . . . Instead strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Luke 12:22-27; 31-32

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Sometimes we forget that young people experience despair and darkness in their lives. An incident that may seem trivial to adult eyes can be very significant to a youth. Be sensitive to the fears and concerns of younger youth without being condescending.
- A few years ago, Terry Waite was front-page news. Don't assume, however, that younger youth know who he is or what he did. They may want to know more about him, why he was taken captive, and who his captors were.
- **Discussion Starter:** What person, event, or possession do you cherish most?

Little did Terry Waite realize that his memories, experiences and regular worship would continue to feed him during captivity. What special memories of family, friends and church would give you special strength in the dark night?

Many former POW's say that hostages and prisoners must focus on a reason greater than themselves for survival: family, faith or country. What would give you reason to survive? What would give you the desire to live?

O God, by whose grace your servant Terry Waite, kindled with the flame of your love, became a burning and a shining light in your Church: Grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipline, and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Of a Monastic

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 249

## Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Gather enough Bibles for each youth and put them on a table. As people enter the room, ask them to take a Bible and find their favorite Psalm or story or other excerpt.

When everyone has arrived, select a youth lector and ask the group to turn to Luke 12 in their Bibles.

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Dear God,*

*We pray that we may have the courage to help others in need, that your will may be done through us. We ask that we will be willing to risk ourselves for good knowing that you will be with us. Amen.*

Elizabeth, Grade 9

**Lector:** *A reading from the 12th chapter of Gospel of Luke, verses 22-27 and 31-32.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Explain to the youth who Terry Waite is and what his mission was in Lebanon. Be sure to include the concern of the whole world for those who were held hostage.

Help young people assemble a "Desert Island Survival Pack." Tell them they may take along one book of the Bible (suggest they select the book identified in the Coming Together activity), one novel or biography, one video, one piece of jewelry, and one photo. Pass out paper and pencils so youth can list their selections. Remind them that their choices must stand the test of time.

After they have made their decisions, ask them to explain why they chose each item. Why is that selection special? Did anyone make the same selection?

After talking about items in their imaginary survival kits, ask young people what they would have if their kits were lost. Brainstorm answers. Encourage youth to rely on memories and faith when tangible items are lost.

For further discussion:

- Sometimes we say something is important, but no one would know it is important from our actions. Are there times in your life when your actions speak louder than words?

## Optional Activities

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

## Expressions

- **Biographies:** Terry Waite had a lot of time to think about his life story while he was in captivity. Even though much of the actual writing was done after he was released, he had thought through much of what he wanted to say. Chart your autobiography like Terry Waite did by identifying the high and low points in your life.
- **Letter from prison:** Imagine that you are in prison in a distant land. Write a letter to your family describing the conditions of the cell and your thoughts and feelings.
- **Memories:** Think of one special memory that would help you endure captivity. Write it down with as much detail as possible.

## Games

- **Capture the flag:** Play this game outside or in a large room. Divide the youth into two teams and give each team a flag. The team can hide or place the flag wherever they choose as long as it is accessible. Divide the playing area in half with a real or imaginary line. The teams have two objectives: protect their own flag and capture the other flag. Give both teams time to plan their strategies, then begin the game. As long as team members stay on their team's side of the line, they are safe. If they venture across the line, they can be "captured." The captured player can no longer participate. The game ends when a flag is taken and safely returned "home."

## Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be respected. When choosing media activities consider

local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch *The Secret Garden* and discuss how the two children were held captive. What was the key to their freedom?
- **Print:** Save the world news sections from the daily paper for at least a week. Ask the youth to look through the papers to find stories about captives or others whose lives are being threatened through political unrest.

## 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 "When peace, like a river" in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 188.
- Read or sing "My Shepherd will supply my need," *The Hymnal 1982*, 664.
- One of the things people do if someone is lost or missing is to tie ribbons on trees. During the time of Terry Waite's captivity, people tied yellow ribbons on lots of trees around the country. This practice comes from a song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" by Tony Orlando and Dawn. Find out why the connection was made by listening to the words.

## Service

- **Captives:** Some people are captive in their homes or in institutions because of poor health or other conditions. Ask the clergy or directors of local nursing homes or hospitals for the names of people who would

## WEAVINGS

- The first definition of the word "captive" in the dictionary is similar to the situation Terry Waite found himself in: one who is forcibly confined, restrained, or subjugated, as a prisoner. The second meaning refers to one who is enslaved by a strong emotion or passion. Think about times you may have been captive to anger or some other emotion. How did you find release?
- While news from Lebanon rarely greets us from the front page today, other places from that part of the world are still in turmoil. Despite peace efforts, terrorists are still active in Northern Ireland, Israel, and in all parts of the earth. Civil wars in some African nations continue to divide and destroy people and the land. Pray today for those like Terry Waite who work for peace in the world.

## RESOURCE POSTER

- The World (No. 3)
- Window of Opportunity (No. 1)

enjoy getting letters from young people. Give youth time during the session to write a letter and/or draw a picture for someone on the list. Encourage them to continue to send cards and notes to this person during the year.

## Sharing

- **Survival campout:** Let the youth plan a survival weekend for all ages. Find out if anyone in the church or a community scouting organization is knowledgeable about this kind of activity and would be willing to work with some of the youth in planning the weekend. Emphasize that only the bare essentials will be taken: the group must rely on each other and the environment for food. What will they take on the trip that is not tangible?

## Study

- **Hostage survival:** Find a member of your congregation or community who may be a former POW (prisoner of war) or have special training in hostage survival. Ask this person to relate how his or her faith help or would help them in a captive situation.
- **Biblical prisoners:** The Bible has many stories about people who were captives. During the time of the judges, Samson was blinded and became captive of the Philistines (Judges 14-16). Taken hostage to Babylon, Daniel faced death more than once (the book of Daniel). Paul was perhaps the most famous person in the New Testament to face long-term captivity (see Paul's letters).

Choose one of these stories to find out how each person's faith was tested in captivity.

- **Lebanon:** Encourage youth interested in the story of Terry Waite to visit the library to learn more about Lebanon and why captives were taken. How has Lebanon changed today? Which issues that caused terrorists to take captives remain unresolved?

## Voices

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

Somewhere deep within lies the secret of my survival. It lies beyond family, beyond friends, beyond simple desires and hopes. Somewhere, somehow, I must touch the mystery that is God.

I plaited. . .the shapes of a cross and secured it to a wall. This symbol of suffering and hope gives me a focus in my drab prison. The Christian message of redemption through suffering is hard to grasp, and even harder to live! I pray for release from both physical restraints and my inner blindness.

Each day I have walked through the Psalmist's valley. The shadow of death has been around me. Then, for a space, I have caught a glimpse of the warmth of light, and the shadow has receded. [Christ] spoke so simply and so profoundly about the essential fundamentals of life.

Terry Waite (in captivity)

I believe in the sun when it is not shining.

I believe in love where feeling is not  
I believe in God even if he is silent.

Anonymous victim of the holocaust

## Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 823 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (p. 3 of the Session Leaflet). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.*

*O God our Father, whose Son forgave his enemies while he was suffering shame and death: Strengthen those who suffer for the sake of conscience; when they are accused, save them from speaking in hate; when they are rejected, save them from bitterness; when they are imprisoned, save them from despair; and to us your servants, give grace to respect their witness and to discern the truth, that our society may be cleansed and strengthened. This we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, our merciful and righteous Judge. Amen.*

For those who suffer for the sake of Conscience  
*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 823*

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Look For

Are the youth able to recall important memories from their lives that are comforting? Are they able to identify stories from the Bible or prayers that have meaning for them? Can youth identify qualities that can help them keep their spirits free?

# Taize: Unity and Reconciliation

## Witnesses to the World

### Objective

This session will focus on the reconciliation of the Church's divisions, especially along denominational lines, through Taize's ministry. The youth will be able to identify situations in their lives where reconciliation is needed and to name ways in which unity with others can be restored.

### Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session centers on the community of Taize. Taize was established in a small French village following World War II. The purpose of the community is to discover what we have in common through prayer and song. Key names are Taize and Brother Roger. Key ideas are Church unity and reconciliation. Think about the divisions the Church is experiencing today and focus on beliefs that all Christians agree on.

### Commentary

The Taize teaching of Christian unity and reconciliation makes the Gospel "real" for a broken and fragmented world. For many outside the Church, the divisions along denominational lines are stumbling blocks to hearing and accepting the Good News of God in Christ.

Young people in the Church see the discontinuity between Jesus' deep desire for his disciples to be one and the many divisions in the Church.

Taize and its ministry appeals to "idealistic" youth because the brothers live and teach a life of unity and reconciliation for the Church. Taize presents a living example, "a parable of community," to replace

the brokenness young people often see in the Church.

Brother Roger Schutte founded Taize as a community in France to pray for and nurture peace after World War II. This unpretentious, non-denominational community attracts thousands of pilgrims, especially young people, to its humble facilities each year.

The message of Taize is simple: that Jesus' disciples may be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:22). The brothers work to pass this passion for unity along to the many visitors and pilgrims through worship, study, and conversation.

The worship at Taize is simple: the community gathers three times daily to hear scripture, pray the Psalms, intercede for the Church and world, and meditate on God's word. A notable feature of worship at Taize is simple musical settings of Scripture in many languages.

**For further study:** Refer to Ephesians 2:13-21.

### Personal Views

The issue of unity and reconciliation in the Church can touch some of our deepest insecurities, prejudices, and misunderstandings. Unity in the Church sounds good, but when it involves examining and removing our personal barriers to reconciliation, it can be painful. Leaders will need to be honest in evaluating areas where reconciliation may be difficult for them: race, color, social status, education, sexual preference, and religious beliefs.

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Original art from El Salvador*
  - **Key Verse**—"The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one."—John 17:22
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Philip Melancthon, William Penn, Tertullian
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—For the Unity of the Church (BCP, p. 255)
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## LECTOR'S TEXT

*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

*John 17: 20-23*

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Young people are “on the edge” developmentally of being able to see the need for unity and reconciliation in the Church and world. Some may be able “to walk in the shoes” of others and understand the pain caused by divisions and barriers. Others may be unaware or unconcerned about issues of unity and reconciliation. You may find it helpful to explore the “in groups” or cliques they experience at school, in athletics or in their neighborhood. This exploration of feelings and experiences may help your young people understand Jesus’ desire for unity in the Church.
- **Discussion Starter:** What are some of the things that divide Christians today? What are some of the issues that the Episcopal Church is facing? What would a unified Church look like?

What would the Church look like if Jesus’ prayer for the unity of his disciples was fulfilled? Do we truly want unity in the Church?

Issues that divide us cross denominational lines, such as disagreements of doctrine like the Apostolic succession of bishops. Significant disagreements exist within some denominations, such as the ordination of women. And social issues, like prayer in schools, divide Christians in a number of different ways.

Christians today seem to focus more on what divides us than on what we agree on. Newspapers and other media often report on the fights and divisions without mentioning efforts at seeking unity.

*Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

*Of the Reign of Christ  
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254*

## Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Light a large candle and place it in the center of the room with enough smaller candles for each member of the class to have one. As the youth arrive invite them to light a small candle from the large one. When everyone is present extinguish the smaller candles.

Ask the youth to turn to John 17: 20-23 in their Bibles; select a lector and read the following prayer together (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Dear God, Help us to develop and return to harmonious relationships with you through our own prayers and worship. We ask you, moreover, to help us unite as your people with Christianity as our common thread to worship you. Amen.*

Elizabeth, Grade 9

**Lector:** *A reading from the Gospel of John, chapter 17, verses 20 through 23.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 20 min)

Give each youth an identity: Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist. Ask them to come together to discuss what we all have in common. Begin with obvious things such as: We are all human beings. We all live in (town), (state). Add other things the youth may have in common. Then move to Church. We are all Christians. We all say the Apostles’ Creed. We all believe in Jesus Christ. Ask a youth think of other ways Christians are alike. Do the labels given earlier make any difference? How can we emphasize to others what we have in common?

### For further discussion:

- Why do we focus on ways that people are different from us?
- Why is it so hard to find things we like about someone else and so easy to point out what we don’t like?
- How can God help us to seek unity in our church? the Church?

## 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

- **Together:** Write a story or poem about unity. The end product will be the work of the entire class with everyone contributing their best efforts. Some may write, some may illustrate, some may devise a cover and layout.
- **Chants:** One of the unique ministries of Taize is that the music sung at a worship service is simple enough for everyone to sing in spite of the language barriers. The words and tune are simple and repeat often. (*The Hymnal 1982*, 710 - 715 are examples.) Write your own Taize chant.

## Games

- **Walls that separate:** Invite youth to form two groups and build a wall using masking tape and newspapers. The wall must be big enough to separate your group from the other one. When the walls are built, ask the youth to say out loud words that divide and separate people. Examples: money, neighborhood, schools, religion, politics, etc. As the groups shout out their words, invite one member of each group to stand in the middle of the two walls and say, "Forgiven." It is their job to keep saying the word forgiven longer than the others can think of words that divide. Forgiven should be the final word.

## Media

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

- **Video:** Watch the video *Taize: That Little Springtime* about the community in Taize, France. Discuss the reasons why so many young people are visiting the community? Is it like a resort? Why do you think they go?
- **Print:** Pass out copies of the front pages of a daily newspaper you collected during the week. Ask youth to find articles that emphasize disagreements among people. Look for ways in which people agree.

## 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 "God is love, and where true love is" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 576). This is sung in Latin at Taize. It is "Ubi caritas, et amour. Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est."
- Sing "One Bread, One Body," *Glory and Praise* 126.
- Sing "We are the World."

## Service

- **Visit another church:** Plan to visit a church of another denomination in your area for worship. Focus on what is identical or similar to your own worship.

## Sharing

- **Taize Service:** Plan a service of Taize music and Scripture reading for the rest of the congregation. Find youth or people from among the congregation who could read in other languages.

## WEAVINGS

- This session could be scheduled in conjunction with the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*, observed between the Confession of St. Peter (January 18) and the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25).
- One of the meanings for unity is the combination of parts into a whole. This sounds a lot like Paul's description of the Church. Paul says we are called to be one Body with Christ as the head.
- The world is much more likely to sow seeds of unrest instead of reaping harmony. In our communities, youth often experience bitter rivalries between schools. One part of our nation competes with others for businesses and government funds. Countries like Ireland and the former Yugoslavia are torn with strife. In the midst of this, God offers a message of hope. Through the teachings of the Church and places such as Taize we can find reconciliation.

## Study

- **Read:** Read and discuss *The Story of Taizé*, 3rd edition, by J. L. Gonzalez Balado, 1990.
- **Investigate:** Contact the World Council of Churches and Consultation on Church Union to find out what efforts are being made to further Church unity. Ask what youth can do to encourage unity.

## Voices

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

O God, we do not desire new contentions and discord. We pray only that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the grave, will guide us, that all of us who are in many churches and many communions may be one Church, one communion, and one in him.

Philip Melanchthon

O God, help us not to despise or oppose what we do not understand.

William Penn

See how these Christians love one another.

Tertullian

## Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Standing around the one large candle still burning and turn to the prayer on page 255 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.*

*Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before his passion prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as you and he are one: Grant that your Church, being bound together in love and obedience to you, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in him whom you have sent, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

For the Unity of the Church  
*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 255*

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Look For

Can the young people identify the divisions and barriers they see in the Church, (local, national, and international) and in the world (school, family, community)?

# C. S. Lewis: Presenting the Gospel Witnesses in the World

## Objective

This session will focus on the life and ministry of C. S. Lewis, an Englishman and an Anglican, who has influenced millions of people with his writings and his life. The youth will be able to name one or more of Lewis' writings and tell how authors influence others by proclaiming the gospel.

## Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session looks at C. S. Lewis' life and ministry as a teacher and writer. Key names and ideas are Aslan, Anglican, proclaiming the gospel through literature. For preparation, recall writings by Lewis or other authors that have influenced your faith in Jesus Christ.

## Commentary

C. S. Lewis, (Clive Staples) was a professor at Cambridge and Oxford Universities in England. During his teen years he dropped out of the Church of England, questioning his faith. During his college years, he declared himself an atheist, one who does not believe in God. Lewis struggled with his faith intellectually and was converted to Christianity in his early thirties. He wrote about his conversion in an autobiography *Surprised by Joy*.

A scholar and writer before his conversion, he later turned his attention to the subject of Christianity. Lewis was a prolific writer and Christian apologist, a writer or speaker who defends the Christian position, in this century.

The ministry of an apologist is to defend, explain, and articulate the

Gospel in a way that listeners will understand, adjusting the medium of communication but not the message communicated. The challenge for an apologist is "to become all things to all people" without compromising the integrity of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Many Christians, especially Anglicans (members of the Church of England), attribute their understanding of the Christian faith to the writings of C. S. Lewis. These writings often help believers comprehend the Christian faith more clearly and non-believers understand the Faith for the first time.

C. S. Lewis once said, "Any fool can write *learned* language. The vernacular is the test. If you can't turn your faith into it, then either you don't understand it or you don't believe in it."

**For Further Study:** The story of his marriage late in life has been the subject of a book by Lewis and a movie called *Shadowlands*.

## Personal Views

C. S. Lewis believed that "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Our pleasures come from being entertained either by books, movies or television. Stories about peoples lives, where we make connections either because we can laugh together, cry together, or be afraid together can help us to hear God speak.

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Lion*, SuperStock
  - **Key Verse**—*I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.* —I Corinthians 9:23
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**— Peter Abelard, Goethe, James Boswell
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**— Of a Theologian and Teacher (BCP, p. 248)
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## LECTOR'S TEXT

*What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.*

*For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself slave to all, so that I might win more of them. . . . To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.*

*I Corinthians 9:18-19; 22-23*

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth look up to heroes. Too often those heroes are figures who do outrageous things or perform in an outstanding way for money. Yet, youth really want to be able to identify with someone like themselves who makes it through difficult times. These kinds of heroes are often found in books. Introduce youth to books you have read about the lives of Christians and encourage them to read and reflect on the characteristics of these people.
- **Discussion Starter:** What kinds of books do you like to read? What characters in movies or books do you like? Why? How does knowing about or reading about these characters help you to learn about yourself or about God?

Things we read, see, or hear often nag at us, reminding us of things done and things left undone, dreams realized and dreams unfulfilled. A phrase or a story line may be in our memory long after the title of the book and its author have been forgotten, or the movie is put on the back shelf of the video store.

A story that speaks to our pain can be healing and sustaining because someone else has been through this too. Can God talk to us through books, movies, stories as well as people? With God all things are possible.

C. S. Lewis like many other creative storytellers has touched the lives of adults through books like *The Screwtape Letters*, *Mere Christianity*, and *The Great Divorce*. He has also influenced the lives of many children through the *Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of seven fairy tales about the land of Narnia. The first book of the series *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* provides a delightful story with underlying themes of sacrifice, atonement, and resurrection.

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

Proper 28

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 236*

## Coming Together

(Time: 5 min)

Display the poster of the "Window of Opportunity," Resource

Poster No. 1. As the youth arrive ask them to imagine what it would be like to travel through the open door. What would it be like on the other side? Who would be there? Could you find God?

Ask the youth to turn to I Corinthians 9: 18-19; 22-23 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read the following prayer together (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*He will come, he will come.*

*He will come and protect me from all snares and perils of the night.*

*He will come to breathe the breath of life in my soul.*

*He shall die for me and save me, and so, I shall live.*

*He will come. He will come in a form that will vanquish all evil from the earth*

*and protect me.*

*And so, I shall live.*

Michael, Grade 8

**Lector:** *A reading from First Corinthians, chapter 9 verses 18 through 19 and 22 through 23.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 20 min)

Tell the youth that C. S. Lewis used his skill as a writer and story teller to share his faith in Jesus Christ. Taking stories from the Bible, placing them in modern times, and using today's language is another way of sharing the gospel with others.

Ask the youth to choose a parable from Matthew, chapter 13 or Luke, chapter 15 and retell the story in a way that their friends might understand. One way to begin is by thinking about traveling through the "Window of Opportunity," Resource Poster No. 1. Use contemporary voices such as city talk, punk, Southern drawl, Texan twang. What if you are writing for your

parents? What voice would you use?

**For further discussion:**

- What are some of the ideas you used to convey the message of the Gospel?
- Would your friends better understand a story that takes place today or one that happens in the future?

**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**

- **Winter and Ice:** In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis, the White Witch wants to keep Aslan the lion away, so that it will always be winter. Using white paint or chalk create a winter scene on black construction paper. What are the advantages of it always being winter? What are the disadvantages? Why do people separate themselves from God? Is that like always being in only one season?
- **Aslan the lion:** Aslan, like the conquering king, comes to save the day, in C. S. Lewis *Chronicles of Narnia*. Write a poem about a lion or any other “beast” that is often given the role of rescuer. What other stories do you know that repeat this theme? Is the “beast-hero” ever sacrificed so that others may live?

**Games**

- **Stuffed in a Closet:** The children in the story of Narnia, get to Narnia by going through a wardrobe, a large piece of furniture used as a closet. Play hide and seek, begin by having one person

hide. Then everyone else can search for that person. When you find him/her don't tell anyone, but hide with them. The game ends when everyone is “stuffed in the closet.”

**Media**

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

- **Video:** Watch *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. This may be familiar to many. Ask specifically that the class look for the Christian symbols and beliefs that underlie the story.
- **Print:** Read *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis. These letters written between the devil and the devil's helper, discussing ways to get human creatures to turn away from God.

**Music**

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

- Read or sing together “Morning glory, starlit sky” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 585).
- Sing “Blessed Assurance” *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, 184.
- Compare the lyrics from some of the current Christian rock groups. How are they using the medium of music to convey the message of the gospel.

**WEAVINGS**

- Other writers and artists have found ways to spread the message of the gospel by making the message “user friendly.” Painters have used their art for centuries to help people understand the gospel. Be aware of different ways the gospel is presented today through the arts.
- The word “apologist” has a somewhat negative meaning in our culture because of its close relationship to the word apology. Apology usually refers to an admission of wrong doing or discourtesy to another person. An apologist is one who makes a clear, and systematic defense of Christianity.
- Many other writers in current times have used their skill and imagination to spread the gospel through movies and literature. Be alert to new contributions in this area.

**RESOURCE POSTER**

- Window of Opportunity (No. 1)

## Service

- **Book collection:** Collect Christian books for a church supported shelter or hospital. Choose books that will convey a message of the gospel for those in need of hope.

## Sharing

- **Telling others:** Volunteer to organize, establish, or staff a church library. Part of the task may be soliciting and reviewing books that offer a Christian theme. Be sure that books for all ages are included.

## Study

- **Apologist:** Consider a theological term, such as grace, redemption, reconciliation, or atonement, and explain its significance in ordinary language. This is the work of an apologist. What different mediums (art, poetry, music, drama) can be used? Can the message be misunderstood in different mediums? How?
- **Drama:** Read the series *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Write and produce a drama based on one of the books.

## Voices

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

Against the disease of writing one must take special precautions, since it is a dangerous and contagious disease.

Peter Abelard

In every man's writings, the character of the writer must lie recorded.

Goethe

All work is as seed sown; it grows and spreads, and sows itself anew.

James Boswell

## Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 248 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.  
O God, by your Holy Spirit you give to some the word of wisdom, to others the word of*

*knowledge, and to others the word of faith: We praise your Name for the gifts of grace manifested in your servant C. S. Lewis, and we pray that your Church may never be destitute of such gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Of a Theologian and Teacher  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 248

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Look For

Did the youth understand what it means to put the gospel into modern day terms? Did they also understand that the true message of the gospel is not changed? Did they know who C. S. Lewis was and what he wrote?

# Le Chambon: Helping Strangers Witnesses in the World

## Objective

The objective of this session is to examine why the town of Le Chambon in France decided to protect Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. Youth will explore the actions of the people of Le Chambon and discover ways in which young people can extend hospitality to strangers or endangered persons today.

## Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this section focuses on the work of the French village, Le Chambon, during World War II and the Jewish Holocaust. Key names are Le Chambon, André and Magda Trocme, and the Holocaust. For spiritual preparation think about your feelings of the Holocaust and extending hospitality to strangers.

## Commentary

During the four years of the German occupation of France (1940 to 1944), the village of Le Chambon, with a population of about 3,000 impoverished people, saved the lives of about 5,000 refugees (mostly Jewish children). Under André Trocme's tireless leadership and Magda Trocme's unceasing hospitality, the tiny village of Le Chambon provided a "city of refuge" and sanctuary for Jews and other refugees escaping the Third Reich's persecution and death camps. Cities of refuge is an Old Testament concept (See Deuteronomy 19:1-13), that like Le Chambon called for protection of the powerless.

André Trocme preached and lived a life of non-violence, encouraging townspeople to quietly and

peacefully defy the law of the land. By doing so, they risked their village and families for strangers. When asked in later years why they had risked so much, villagers simply replied, "How could we not?" André Trocme said, "It is humiliating to Europe that such things [the Holocaust] can happen, and that we as French cannot act against such barbaric deeds that come from a time we once believed was past. The Christian Church should drop to its knees and beg pardon of God for its present incapacity and cowardice."

The Protestant villagers of Trocme's church set-up several "safe houses," forged identification papers and provided travel escorts for the constant stream of primarily French Jews. André Trocme was awarded the Medal of Righteousness by the State of Israel for his vision and leadership on behalf of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. Philip Hallie said of him, "For Trocme, every person—Jew and non-Jew, German and non-German—had a spiritual diamond at the center of his vitality, a hard, clear, pricelessly valuable source that God cherishes."

**For further study refer to:** *Lest Innocent Blood be Shed* by Philip Hallie, a chronicle of the ministry of Le Chambon.

## Personal Views

Reflect on your understanding and feelings about the Holocaust of World War II. For many, this event

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—SuperStock
  - **Key Verse**—*And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."*  
—Matthew 25:40
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Holocaust survivor, André Trocme, Philip Hallie, Rabbi Baal Shem-Tov
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—For Social Justice (BCP, p. 260)
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## LECTOR'S TEXT

*'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'*

*Matthew 25:34b-40*

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Make sure youth understand the meaning of the term "Holocaust" before you use it. While we use it primarily in reference to the Jewish Holocaust during World War II, the word has also been applied to the killing of thousands in Cambodia after the Vietnam War and other massacres.
- *The Diary of Anne Frank*, both the book and the movie, is an excellent introduction to the terror and sadness of the Holocaust through the eyes of a young teen.
- **Discussion Starter:** Would you have had the courage to hide Jewish refugees from the Germans?

In world history represents total and complete evil. Do you know anyone or have you been in contact with a person who survived the Holocaust? What did you think of their stories?

Would you have been able to join the villagers of Le Chambon as they lit a small candle in the darkness? Would that have been too risky, especially if you put your family at risk? Would you have felt more productive in the armed French Resistance instead of a pacifist in a city of refuge?

Consider your feelings about extending hospitality to a stranger. Would you welcome a total stranger, as the townspeople did, into your home today? In our world, is it prudent to invite strangers into our homes? In what other ways could you reach out to "strangers" or endangered persons in your church or community?

O God, you have called us to be your children, and have promised that those who suffer with Christ will be heirs with him of your glory: Arm us with such trust in him that we may ask no rest from his demands and have no fear in his service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Preface for Lent

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, p. 51

## Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Before the group arrives, put large dots on slips of paper. Make half of them red and half blue. Put them into a container, and let each youth select one as they enter the room. Ask them to pin them on so everyone can plainly see if they are a "blue" or a "red." Don't tell them what they will be used for later.

After everyone has gathered, select a lector and ask the youth to turn to Matthew 25:34b-40 in their Bibles. Read together the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Almighty God,*

*I thank you for all of the blessings and gifts that you have endowed me with. I realize how fortunate I am compared to others. I hope that, with your infinite wisdom and guidance, I may help people in my daily life who need assistance. Let me help others attain the blessings in their lives that I have been given so generously in mine. In your name, Amen.*

Kate, Grade 9

**Lector:** *A reading from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, verses 34b through 40.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

After the opening, make sure everyone is wearing a dot and that the colors are fairly evenly distributed. Separate the youth according to the color of the dot they are wearing. Explain that the red dots are in charge of the blue dots.

Encourage the red dots to collect all the valuables (rings, watches, and so on) from the blue dots. (Assure the blue dots their possessions will be returned at the end of the game.) Use the blue dots to run simple errands, such as bringing refreshment, cleaning up the room, or hanging up coats. If the blue dots complain, explain that they deserve their treatment because they are blue. If they continue to protest, escort them from the room "for elimination." Allow the scenario to continue for a reasonable time, then gather the youth. Ask them to remove their dots and return them to you.

How did the blue dots feel being singled out because of their dot color?

How did the red dots feel being in charge? Have any people or groups ever been treated like the blue dots?

Tell the story about the people of Le Chambon. Include quotes from the Commentary or the Session Leaflet.

What do you think about these villagers? Why didn't other towns do the same thing? Where did they find the courage to face the German occupiers?

#### For further discussion:

- What do you know about the Holocaust?
- Could this ever happen again?

### 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

- **Diaries:** Le Chambon was known for its ministry of hospitality, shelter and rescue of about 5,000 Jewish children and adults during the German occupation of France from 1940 to 1944. Encourage youth to imagine that they are being sheltered from Nazi persecution by the village. Ask them to keep an imaginary diary of feelings and events as they are sheltered and then escorted to safety.
- **Hideout:** Design a hiding place that could be in a house or building in a town. Draw a picture of the hideout, or write a description of a safe place to hide. What would the villagers need to provide in a hiding place?

### Games

- **Hide and seek:** Ask the youth who were the red dots to hide their eyes or go into a windowless

room. Tell the youth who were the blue dots to hide from the red dots. Proscribe the area that can be used for hiding places, with the meeting room as the "home base." Blues who can safely get "home," are free.

### 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:** The movie *Schindler's List* is a graphic and compelling portrait of the Holocaust and one man's effort to rescue Jews from Nazi death camps. This movie in its entirety may be too graphic for your youth. However, you may be able to show selected scenes to help youth understand the desperate situation the Jewish people faced.
- **Print:** The novel, *The Plague*, was written by Albert Camus while he was visiting Le Chambon in 1942. He wrote it as a companion piece to the story of the town. Display the Resource Poster No. 1. Ask what would it be like not to be able to go through an open window?

### Music

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

## WEAVINGS

- This session could be taught on the "Day of Remembrance," a Sunday set aside each spring by national and local Jewish organizations to remember the horrors of the Holocaust. It could also be scheduled in conjunction with the anniversary of Krystalnacht, November 9 and 10. This is the night when many Jewish business were destroyed by mobs. Krystalnacht means the night of the breaking glass. This date also marks the breaking down of the Berlin Wall.
- Before the word holocaust was associated with the Jewish massacre during World War II, it referred to widespread destruction, especially by fire. The terrible ovens of the concentration camps and the widespread devastation of European Jews give the word a whole new meaning.
- One of the most troubling aspects of the Holocaust was the killing of children. Ironically, teenagers had the best chance of survival because they were more likely to be healthy and able to do hard labor. Who would have survived in your family?

## RESOURCE POSTER

- Window of Opportunity (No. 1)

- Sing together “O God, our help in ages past,” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 680).
- Sing “On Eagles Wings” from *Glory and Praise*, 119.
- Listen to “Whenever God Shines His Light” by Van Morrison, *Availon-Sunset*, Caledonia Productions, Ltd.

### Service

- **Safe houses:** Contact the local police department and find out if there is a safe house program for your community. In this program, houses that are safe for neighborhood children to enter if they are frightened are marked with a special sign. Youth could help the community set up a safe house program around the church or in their own neighborhoods.

### Sharing

- **Speakers:** Contact a local synagogue or Jewish organization for someone to make a presentation about the Holocaust at your church. Invite other youth and adult groups to join you.

### Study

- **Cities of refuge:** Explore the concept of cities of refuge in the Old Testament (Numbers 35:9-31, Joshua 20:1-9 and Deuteronomy 19:1-13).

- **Hospitality:** Both the Old and New Testaments have stories about hospitality, beginning with Abraham. See how many more stories about people welcoming strangers to their home you can find.
- **Freedom:** The Underground Railroad sheltered and escorted slaves from the South to freedom in the North before and during the American Civil War. Compare the ministry of Harriet Tubman and others in the 1860's with the ministry of Le Chambon in the 1940's.

### Voices

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

The Holocaust was storm, lightning, thunder, wind, rain, yes. Le Chambon was the rainbow. You have been speaking about the village that saved the lives of all three of my children.

Holocaust survivor

Faith works on earth. I do not know about heaven.

Andre Trocme

If you stand firmly opposed to overwhelming destructive power, you expose yourself to destruction.

Philip Hallie

In remembrance resides the secret of redemption.

Rabbi Baal Shem-Tov

### Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 260 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 4). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.*

*Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

For Social Justice

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 260

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

### Look For

Are the youth able to describe the ministry of the people of Le Chambon? Can they relate to the courage of the villagers of Le Chambon? Are they able to find ways they can extend hospitality to strangers today?

# Desmond Tutu: Peace and Justice

## Witnesses for the World

### Objective

The objective of this session is to explore peace and justice as seen through the eyes of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the people of South Africa. Youth will be able to identify issues of peace and justice in their own communities and the world.

### Background for Leaders

The commentary for this session focuses on Archbishop Desmond Tutu's fight against apartheid in South Africa. The key name is Desmond Tutu; the key ideas are apartheid, peace, and justice. For spiritual preparation consider your own reactions to other races and ethnic groups and how those feelings relate to justice and peace.

### Commentary

Apartheid, "apartness," defined the political, social and financial life in the Republic of South Africa until the early 1990's. The white minority maintained a strict policy of segregation between government defined races (white, colored or Asian, and black) in residence, education, and many other areas of life.

A leader in the fight against the tyranny of apartheid was Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of the Anglican diocese in Capetown, South Africa. He is also a potent symbol of the vigorous African Christianity of the late twentieth century.

Tutu is best known, however, for leading the fight against the government's policy of segregation by encouraging non-violent protest. He is unwavering in his belief that all people deserve justice. He said, "The only separation the Bible knows

is between believers on the one hand and unbelievers on the other. Any other kind of separation, division, disunity is of the devil. It is evil and from sin."

One of the most important tools in this fight has been Tutu's position in the Church. His election to Archbishop was an anomaly because indigenous people rarely receive leadership roles in South Africa. He has used this position to speak with the authority of the Church against apartheid.

Desmond Tutu and his family were often detained, searched, and jailed for their stand against government policies. Because of his courage in the face of unrelenting prejudice, Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his tireless work against apartheid. The release of African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela in 1990 marked the beginning of the end of an official government policy of apartheid, although deep animosity among ethnic groups remains.

Archbishop Tutu still vigorously works for peace and justice in his country. He says, "Through our common baptism we have been members of and united in the body of our Dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This Jesus Christ, whatever we may have done, has broken down all that separates us irrelevantly—such as race, sex, culture status, etc. In this Jesus Christ we are forever bound together as one redeemed humanity, black and white together."

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### SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Afrapix, Impact Visuals
  - **Key Verse**—*For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.* —Ephesians 2:14
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Franklin D. Roosevelt, André Gide, Bishop Trevor Huddleson
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—For the Oppressed (BCP, p. 826)
-

## LECTOR'S TEXT

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*

*Ephesians 2:13-20*

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth often carry unconscious prejudices from outside influences. Even when we think we have conquered those feelings, sometimes we realize that we hold unreasonable fears. Help youth recognize their own hidden prejudices.
- Most youth are exposed to more diversity in their schools and other activities than their parents and adult leaders were. They can teach adults about acceptance and getting along with others.
- **Discussion Starter:** Have you ever felt that you were a victim of prejudice? How did that feel?

**For further study refer to:** *House of Bishops Pastoral Letters on Sin of Racism*, March 1994; *Resolutions on Racism from 70th General Convention*, 1994; and *The Rainbow People of God*, by Desmond Tutu.

## Personal Views

Apartheid, segregation and discrimination stem from the sin of racism. The House of Bishops, in a March 1994 pastoral letter, defined racism as "the systematic oppression of one race over another which occurs at the personal and institutional level." Perhaps no other word evokes more emotion and reaction than racism.

This topic may prove to be difficult for you and your young people because of the stormy atmosphere that discussions of apartheid, segregation and racism sometimes create. Look honestly at your own prejudices or stereotypes about other ethnic groups and races. Where have you fallen short of being "colorblind"?

You may find it helpful to draw parallels between the U.S. and South Africa regarding racial discrimination, segregation and civil rights. What are your recollections of the 1960's and 1970's regarding the civil rights movements, desegregation and racial discrimination? What contemporary events reveal that racism still exists in this country? How do you react to those events?

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquillity your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one

God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For Peace

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 258

## Coming Together

(Time: 5-10 min)

Hang Resource Poster No. 3, the World Map, in a prominent place. As the youth arrive, ask them to indicate where on the map their families originated. Use pins, post-it notes, or hang a sheet of paper next to the map for youth to make their entries.

After everyone has gathered, ask the youth to find Ephesians 2:13-20 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read together the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2).

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*Almighty God, we pray that one day all oppression will be lifted, all abominations will be abolished, and all of your children will be able to join hands, exalting and rejoicing in your name: one voice, all equal under your judgement. Amen.*

Kate, Grade 9

**Lector:** *A reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 13 through 20.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

During the week gather local newspapers, including the comic sections, and an assortment of magazines. These will be used to see how people are portrayed in the media.

Ask the youth to look through the newspapers and magazines to find examples of stereotypes and tokenism. Stereotypes are over-simplified generalizations; for example, African-American people are good athletes or beautiful women are dumb and blonde. Tokenism is the practice of making only a superficial effort to include ethnic representation in an otherwise homoge

neous group; for example, the inclusion of a minority in a large group of white people. Encourage the youth to also think about the portrayal of people on television.

Give the group sufficient time to find an assortment of both types of prejudice. Talk about the pictures and stories they found. Tell the story of Desmond Tutu and the role he played in the downfall of apartheid in South Africa.

- Are minorities often pictured in run down neighborhoods?
- Are leaders or people in authority usually well-dressed?
- In which families, is the mother the dominant figure?
- How do stereotypes and tokenism lead to prejudice and racism?
- How does racism destroy peace and justice?
- What can you do to promote peace and justice in your own community?

### 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

- **Freedom Charter:** Write a charter for a new country with statements about the rights of the citizens. For example, every one should have access to all institutions. Think about which freedoms you need to list to make sure all people enjoy peace and justice.
- **Potato cuts:** Prints of woodcuts are a common African art. Make your own print with a potato instead of wood. Cut a large potato in half; using knives, cut a design into the smooth part of the potato. Dip the design side of the potato

in black or brown paint, then press on bright-colored cloth or construction paper.

### Games

- **Good news—bad news:** This game tries to find creative ways to turn weapons into peaceful tools. Divide the youth into two teams. Team 1 says, “The bad news is the president just found 10,000 rifles.” Team 2 comes up with a peaceful use saying, “The good news is we can make them into fence posts on farms.” Then Team 2 continues saying the name of a weapon, and Team 1 must respond with a peaceful use. The game is over when one team can’t think of a weapon.

### 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 *To Kill a Mockingbird*, available at video stores, about the affects of racism on a small town.
- **Print:** Look at *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss. What does the story say about prejudice?

### 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.

- Look at the words to “Lift every

## WEAVINGS

- Peace is defined as the absence of war or harmonious relations. Justice is moral rightness or fair treatment in accordance to honor. The two terms are often linked because fairness is rarely achieved without harmony.
- A fairly common bumper sticker reads: If you want justice, work for peace. War or the threat of war gives leaders the excuse to suspend rights of people for the “good of the nation.” The first to feel the impact of these moves are usually minorities. Jewish people throughout Europe lost all rights as the Germans invaded the land in World War II. In this country at the same time, people of Japanese descent were forced to leave their homes and businesses to live in government compounds under military supervision. Pray for people living in tyranny today in Africa and other countries in the world.

## RESOURCE POSTER

- World Map (No. 3)

voice and sing" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 599).

- Sing together "Free at Last" (*Lift Every Voice and Sing*, 230).
- Listen to the music of *Graceland* by Paul Simon. Simon explored the music native to Africa for this recording.

### Service

- **Reach out:** Write to groups such as Amnesty International, Heifer Project, or Bread for the World to find out what you could do to help further justice and peace. Or write the Christian Children's Fund and find out how the youth could sponsor a child in a developing nation.

### Sharing

- **African cooking:** Make yam fritters, an African snack that is prepared ahead of time and eaten cold, for an event at your church. Boil 2 pounds of yams with skin on until tender. Peel and mash smooth. Saute a medium chopped onion and tomato, with ½ green chili that has been minced, in a few tablespoons of oil until brown. Add seasonings (½ t. salt, ¼ t. pepper, ¼ t. thyme) and sauteed mixture to yams. Add beaten egg and ½ cup of bread crumbs and mix well. Form into small patties and saute in peanut oil until brown on both sides.
- **Worldview:** Hang the map from the Coming Together activity in a prominent place in your church. Provide pins or post-it notes and ask the congregation to mark the locations that their families originally came from. Use the map to illustrate the diversity of the congregation.

### Study

- **Jonah:** Find out about the Old Testament prophet Jonah and where God sent him. Who were the people at this place? What did they do?
- **Passion story:** Look at the story of Jesus' trial before Pilate in John 18:28-38. Did Jesus receive justice?
- **Letter to the editor:** Read the information about the myths and realities of hunger on Resource Poster No. 6. From this information write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper about the politics of hunger.

### Voices

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

Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

To free oneself is nothing; it's being free that is hard.

André Gide

God bless Africa.  
Guard her children,  
guide her rulers,  
And give her peace,  
for Jesus Christ's sake.

Bishop Trevor Huddleson

### Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 826 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

**Leader:** *Let us pray.*

*Look with pity, O heavenly Father, upon the people in this land who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all. And grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

For the Oppressed

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 826

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

### Look For

Are youth able to identify issues of justice and peace in the world? Can they describe the role Desmond Tutu played in bringing peace and justice to South Africa? Can they find issues of justice and peace in their own schools and communities?

# L'Arche: Welcoming the Disabled Witnesses in the World

## Objective

The objective of this session is to help young people explore fears and uncertainties they may have toward the mentally and physically disabled. Youth should be able to state that God's love and acceptance is extended to all of God's people regardless of their mental or physical abilities.

## Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on the L'Arche community and its ministry to the mentally handicapped. Key names are Jean Vanier and L'Arche, key phrases are mentally and physically challenged. For spiritual preparation consider your own feelings toward the mentally and physically handicapped.

## Commentary

L'Arche began in 1964 when Jean Vanier, the founder, invited two mentally handicapped men to share their lives in a community setting. From this first community, born in France and in the Roman Catholic tradition, over 100 L'Arche communities have developed in various other cultures and traditions throughout the world. L'Arche is French for "the Ark," meaning a place of refuge and safety in the spirit of the Gospel and the Beatitudes.

"My goal, in starting L'Arche," stated Jean Vanier, "was to find a family, a community with and for those who are poor because of a mental handicap and who feel alone and abandoned.

"Those who come [to help the people at L'Arche] because they feel they have something to bring to the

life of handicapped people often get a shock when they start to become conscious of their own weaknesses and limitations. ... It is always easier to accept the weaknesses of handicapped people—we are there precisely because we expect it—than our own weaknesses which often takes us by surprise! Growth begins when we start to accept our own weaknesses.

"Our focal point of fidelity at L'Arche is to live with handicapped people in the spirit of the Gospel and the Beatitudes. . . . 'To live with' is different from 'to do for.' It doesn't mean simply eating at the same table and sleeping under the same roof. It means that . . . we listen to the handicapped people, that we recognize and marvel at their gifts."

The use of the term "handicapped" is in keeping with the language of Jean Vanier, Henri Nouwen, The Charter of the Communities of L'Arche and L'Arche, Mobile, Alabama.

**For further study refer to:** "Epilogue: *Living the Painting*," The Return of the Prodigal Son, Henri J. M. Nouwen; *Enough Room for Joy*, Bill Clarke, S. J.; *The Challenge of L'Arche*, Jean Vanier; *Charter of the Communities of L'Arche*.

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## SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*SuperStock*
  - **Key Verse**—*You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.* —Leviticus 19:15
  - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
  - **Voices**—Mother Teresa, Robert Louis Stevenson, Madeleine L'Engle
  - **Daily Reflections**
  - **Words to Remember**
  - **Prayer**—For Social Service (BCP, p. 260)
-

## LECTOR'S TEXT

*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, . . .*

*Colossians 3:12-15a*

## TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- If you have a mentally or physically handicapped member of the class, this may be an excellent opportunity for them to relate their frustrations with a "normal" world. Handle this with sensitivity and honesty. The interaction between the young people may prove a grace filled moment.
- It is often easier to be thankful we do not have any handicaps than it is to accept what limitations we all do have. Help the youth to talk about the fact there is no perfect human being and that we are all disabled in some way.
- **Discussion Starter:** How do people usually react when they see someone who is physically different or appears to be mentally handicapped?

## Personal Views

The mentally and physically disabled challenge our world. Their "differences" can be objects of misunderstanding, ridicule and staring. We may feel awkward around them and this awkwardness may manifest itself in unwise or rude comments or actions. Sometimes we become condescending and gratuitous in an effort to be helpful.

As comments from Jean Vanier reveal, our expectations may be turned over when we encounter the handicapped. To what degree are we willing to allow the handicapped, physical or mental "strangers" to enter and perhaps challenge our "normal" world?

L'Arche is "...a refuge for the poor in spirit that they may find here the source of all life." This statement, taken from the L'Arche prayer, could apply to each and everyone of us. Are we not all "poor in spirit" searching for the "source of all life."

*This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus. Amen.*

In the Morning

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 461*

## Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Before class time, make a simple jigsaw puzzle by cutting up a piece of plain light-weight cardboard. As the youth arrive, give each one a piece of the puzzle and ask them to put their names on

their piece and put the puzzle together.

When everyone is present, ask the group to turn to Colossians 3:12-15a in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer. (Session Leaflet, p. 2)

**Lector:** *Let us pray.*

*O God, Help me to see the beauty of every living creature. Let me use your love to see the wonderful qualities that each of us possesses. You have helped me so that I know now that no one's life is meaningless. O God, help me to teach another about love, friendship, and forgiveness. Help me to forget my troubled thoughts so I may know the true beauty of all your creation. Amen.*

Nancy, Grade 7

**Lector:** *A reading from Colossians, chapter 3, verses 12-15a.*

(Full text on p. 2)

**Lector:** *The Word of the Lord.*

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Engaging (Time: 15 min)

Tell the story of Jean Vanier and the founding of the L'Arche communities for the mentally handicapped. Ask the youth to imagine what being mentally slow might be like.

To understand better the limits faced by handicapped people, encourage the youth to temporarily experience a disability. Pass out reclosable sandwich bags containing the following: two cotton balls, a piece of string 18 inches long, and a small amount of petroleum jelly. Give the following directions or write them on cards and put them in the bags. 1) Tie the string to your wrist and a belt loop. 2) Put the cotton balls in your ears. 3) Smear the jelly on a pair of sunglasses. Invite the youth to follow the directions and experience what it would be like to be physically handicapped. Continue with another activity.

Discuss how it felt to be unable to hear clearly or move about freely. Note that it is harder to experience what

being mentally handicapped is like. Ask youth to imagine what it is like to be in a new place where no one speaks the same language as you do and therefore can't understand what you are trying to tell them. Or that everyone is speaking so fast you can't hear what they are saying. Allow the youth time to explore these feelings.

### 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

- **Painting:** Provide the group paper, paint, and markers or colored pencils. Ask them to create a picture without using their hands. See how creative they become.
- **Names:** No one likes to be called names. We do this all the time when we label others based on physical or mental abilities or characteristics. Even the Bible used to label those who could not speak as "dumb." Think of labels or names we use for people with disabilities. Discuss how these names came about. Compare these with the terms used in Colossians 3:12-17. What can we change about this?
- **Wax Paper Reading:** Select a short article or paragraph. Make copies for all the youth and assign one of the following to each one:  
Read the article through a piece of wax paper.  
Read the article wearing someone else's glasses.  
Read the article by looking in a mirror.  
Read the article through a pin hole in a piece of cardboard.

Ask all the youth to write a summary of what they read. Was this an easy or difficult task? Why?

### Games

- **Experiences:** Hold an old-fashioned three-legged race. Pairs of individuals tie their legs together and race to another point in the room. Another alternative is a sack race where individuals put their feet in a pillow case and race to a finish line. A third alternative is to combine the two.
- **Elbows:** Ask youth to stand back to back in pairs, and link elbows. The task is to sit on the floor and get up again without unlinking elbows.
- **Jigsaw Puzzle:** Return to the jigsaw puzzle the youth received when they arrived. Ask them to take their piece and put the puzzle together again with the following adjustments: 1) Wear mittens; 2) Wear a blindfold; 3) Use only one hand; 4) Secretly remove one piece; 5) Set a very brief time limit. Ask how it would feel to be handicapped in any of these ways?

### Media

Today's youth live in a media-rich culture that the Church cannot ignore. However, congregational norms about appropriate experiences vary and need to be

respected. When choosing media activities consider local sentiments and prevailing laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch *The Mask*, a movie about a family struggling with a child who has a disfiguring disease.
- **Print:** Look through current advertisements in magazines. Are there physically and mentally

## WEAVINGS

- The terminology describing the disabled has changed as society has become more sensitive and aware of the issues involved. The preferred term by groups representing the disabled is handicapped.
- Simulating handicaps can only suggest reality. Ongoing interaction with people who have disabilities is a good way to transform ourselves, society, and the church into people who are open and accepting of everyone.
- Congress passed a law requiring that all public facilities be accessible to the handicapped. While compliance with this law can be expensive, many businesses and institutions have found they can make buildings accessible with only minor adjustments. Could a physically handicapped person visit your home? What could you do to make this possible?

## RESOURCE POSTER

- Helping Others (No. 4)

handicapped represented? Consider the clothing ads: Are the clothes easy for all people to put on and take off? Try putting on a jacket or sweater with one arm behind your back.

## 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.

- Examine the words of "What does the Lord require" in *The Hymnal 1982*, 605.
- Sing the African-American spiritual "Standin' in the Need of Prayer."
- Listen to a recording of "You've Got a Friend" by James Taylor.

## Service

- **Plan a Trip:** Organize a visit to a group home or other facility for children who are handicapped. Read and play games with the children. Accompany them on an outing to the park or zoo.

## Sharing

- **Your church:** Examine the physical plant of your church building from the point of view of a disabled person. Are doors wide enough for wheel chairs? Are cup dispensers by water fountains low enough so people can get a

drink? Publications are available from dioceses and the national church on handicap accessibility.

## Study

- **Read:** Read about faith issues from the perspective of handicapped people in the *Journal of Religion*, "Disability and Religion," available from Haworth Press, Inc.
- **Helen Keller:** Read about the life of this woman who overcame blindness and deafness to become a well known speaker and writer.

## Voices

Read and discuss the following quotations (Session Leaflet, p. 3):

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and whilst nursing them minister to you.  
Mother Teresa

When the day returns,  
Call us with morning faces, and  
with morning hearts,  
eager to labour,  
happy if happiness be our portion,  
and if the day is marked for sorrow,  
strong to endure.

Robert Louis Stevenson

"My question is neither confusing nor irrelevant," rejoined the rabbi, "for if you do not know what hurts me, how can you truly love me?"

Madeleine L'Engle

## Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to the prayer on page 260 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (Session Leaflet, p. 3). Read it in unison.

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

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

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

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

## Look For

Are the youth sensitive to the problems and challenges of the physically and mentally handicapped? Can they relate the message of the gospel to compassion for people who are physically and mentally handicapped?