

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth

NEW COVENTANT DISCIPLES Leader's Guide



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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	13
New Covenant Disciples	15

NEW COVENANT DISCIPLES: SESSION TITLES

Mary & Gabriel: Encounter with Mystery	17
Elizabeth & Mary: Someone to Talk To	21
Follow Me: Join Us	25
The Rich Young Ruler: Missed Opportunities.....	29
Paul & Barnabas: Conflict in Relationships.....	33
Paul & Timothy: Learning from Each Other	37
Priscilla & Aquila: Doing God's Work	41
Many Parts: One Body	45
Circles in Christ: Being Disciples.....	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 worshiping and learning in the Christian community, resisting evil, proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ, seeking to serve Christ in all persons, striving for justice and

peace, and respecting the dignity of all human beings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNDERSTANDING YOUNGER YOUTH

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

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

- **Developmental theory** offers insights for the teaching task. Customarily, educators have looked primarily to such theories for help in understanding the growth and development of children. Younger youth are well past the early stages of development, however, and no single developmental viewpoint appears to be adequate by itself to provide a comprehensive basis for planning instruction.
- **Literature** is another source. Stories of youth enable adults to reconnect with adolescents and to experience, vicariously, radically different life-shaping situations.

- **Experiences** of teachers themselves can contribute much reliable information, including memories of their own journeys as young people.

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

Theory—A Source of Information

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

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

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

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

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

Erik Erikson's work postulates a view of development that interweaves the powerful impact of social context with ongoing biological maturation. According to Erikson, at each of eight stages in life a major psychosocial crisis must be resolved in order for development to proceed. In Stage V, the

teenage years, the dominant developmental crisis revolves around identity versus role-confusion. It is a period of confusion, searching, and experimenting with a variety of roles for future choices. A sense of loyalty for different groups often causes conflict within an individual.

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

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

Literature—A Source of Understanding

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

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

Experience—A Source of Connection

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

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

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

Nevertheless, certain aspects of adolescents remain virtually unchanged across the years. Successes, failures, feelings, doubts, joys, and struggles remain a vital part of students' daily lives. Universal themes are evident in the questions youth ask and the answers they seek: “Who am I? Whose am I? Why am I here? What should I do? Where am I going?” It is essential to acknowledge that these themes exist. They were part of our own youth and now become a powerful link with today's students.

Faith in the Classroom

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

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

Structure of faith

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

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

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

Who are Youth?

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

Characteristics of younger youth:

- **They like to have fun.** Fun is not the opposite of learning nor should fun be seen as something to be avoided. On the contrary, people learn best when they are having a good time. When youth are having a good time, they often make a lot of noise. Don't be afraid of a little commotion if most of the group are on task. Encourage your teens to have fun in your class and see how much they will learn.
- **Seek identity.** Younger youth are in an energetic process of seeking who they are, while at the same time, fearing that they may find out. Two key words for the wise leader are: accept and affirm. Accept each person as he or she is; look for qualities in each that you like. Don't try to change them. Affirm the skills, talents, questions, concerns and uniqueness of each person in an intentional way.

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

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

WHO ARE LEADERS?

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

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

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

are unique to their groups and look for ways to include these ideas in their presentations. When leaders give priority to what youth are thinking and feeling, the content follows.

- **Has a long-term commitment to the group.** Good leaders are committed and consistent. There will be ups and downs, and successes and failures. Some weeks the youth may be impossible to reach, but the steadfastness of faith and commitment to the class will make a real difference in the long run. Focus on the overall success of the program and not on any one moment, hour, or week.

Building the Team

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

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

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

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

- **Begin with social time** together, including sharing basic facts about each other.
- **Share faith stories.** A simple way to do this is to ask people to make a chart from birth to the present showing the highlights and low moments of their faith journey. Allow time for everyone to finish before sharing so each person can listen to each presentation.
- **Make a list of each person's gifts** and identify the gifts, talents or interests that he or she would like to contribute to the class.
- **Working Together.** Discuss how the team will work together including roles, tasks, and schedules. Be sure to include in your discussion how young people will be used as leaders in this program (see section on youth as leaders).

- **Review the curriculum materials** together and discuss the best ways for the team to use them.
- **Planning.** Draw up a plan for the year with clear responsibilities for each team member.
- **Leaders need information and training.** Any effective leadership program begins with the sharing of information and the training of skills. This is no less true for Christian leaders. The ECY offers materials to provide a strong base of information about scripture, theology and the Church.
- **Teamwork does not mean just rotating Sundays.** A true team requires blending-together time, talents, skills and gifts. The team should discuss and clarify the ways they will work together before beginning. The team should feel both energized and excited as they initiate this venture.

Youth as Leaders

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

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

- **Sharing Information.** In order for youth to participate effectively in planning for and leading a group, they must have the basic information available to leaders and be able to make choices of their own.
- **Training usually involves practice.** Allowing the teens to try out new ideas, theologies and skills in a safe environment is a great way to train them for leadership roles. Giving them opportunities to lead the group is a way to practice the gifts and talents that God has given them.
- **Young people are not “blank slates.”** The youth in the group come with a richness of ideas, thoughts, opinions, and experiences. They are not empty, inexperienced human beings just waiting to receive facts and gems of wisdom. They have as much to teach as they have to learn. Often they are so used to being treated like “blank slates” that they are reluctant to share all that they have to offer. When they trust that their experiences and opinions are valued, a whole new

world of information, learning and sharing will open up. Encourage this process, and be patient if it takes some time for it to develop.

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

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THE EPISCOPAL CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH

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

A Tool for Teachers

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

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

- **What do I teach?** The curriculum offers a series of modules on

twelve different topics. Leaders using the materials are expected to pursue actively an adult-level understanding of the content of the session outlines, taking seriously their own roles as learners.

- **Whom do I teach?** Leaders are challenged anew to adapt to both the developmental characteristics of the group as well as the particular interests of each individual. The ECY addresses issues of developmental differences from two important perspectives. Content is developmentally appropriate, using Scripture as a basis for exploring issues with younger youth. Within each session provisions are made in activity suggestions for varying degrees of skill and learning styles among students.
- **How do I teach?** The curriculum was written for leaders by clergy and laity who work with youth. Options and guidelines are included to help leaders make adjustments to fit local circumstances. Embedded in the kaleidoscope of optional activity suggestions given for every session are practical comments and specific tips for guiding the process of learning.

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

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

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

USING THE CURRICULUM

Planning Class Sessions

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

Teacher Supports—six sections directed at helping teachers prepare.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Learning Environment

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

Consider three possibilities to create the desired environment.

- **The youth room.** One good alternative is a room at the church designated for young people and arranged with comfortable chairs, couches, etc. This provides a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.
- **Meeting in a home.** Holding meetings at someone's home who lives nearby the church can be a great asset. This provides a casual, comfortable setting that usually enhances the process. This may provide some logistical problems for younger youth but it is well worth investigating. Also, people may be more open to making their homes available if it is done on a rotating basis. Don't rule out this possibility without carefully considering it.

- **Gathering in a restaurant.** A restaurant can provide a wonderful opportunity for a meal, fellowship, and learning. Often young people who wouldn't come to the church will feel comfortable in this setting. Of course, this will raise some financial considerations, but these are not insurmountable. You could also consider meeting at a restaurant on an occasional basis as a way of promoting outreach and for celebration.

A Final Word

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

NEW COVENANT DISCIPLES

The content of this module focuses on relationships in the New Testament (Gospels and Epistles) and Covenant. Titled *New Covenant Disciples*, each session examines a relationship between two individuals who are called to follow Christ. Each pair responds to God's call and lives out their own particular relationship in unique ways. Youth today are also faced with making decisions about relationships with other people, parents, teachers, peers, and their struggle to follow God in opposition to the rest of the world. Seeing themselves as Christians in the world and responding to God's covenant in connection with others based on the promises of the Baptismal Covenant, is the hoped for outcome of this course of study.

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

For Teachers

- **Leader's Guide** (this volume)
Contains 9 sessions of material. The sessions are:
Mary & Gabriel: Encounter with Mystery
Elizabeth & Mary: Someone to Talk to
Follow Me: Join Us
The Rich Young Ruler: Missed Opportunities
Paul & Barnabas: Conflict in Relationships
Paul & Timothy: Learning from Each Other
Priscilla & Aquila: Doing God's Work
Many Parts: One Body
Circles in Christ: Being Disciples

- **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

Mary & Gabriel: Encounter with Mystery

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

This session focuses on what it is like to be called by God and explores the consequences of responding to that call. Youth will be able to describe Mary's call and examine her experience from the perspective of contemporary culture. Youth will also be able to describe their own encounter with God's mystery.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on calls to ministry as well as the mystery of angels. Key names are Gabriel and Mary; the key event is the Annunciation. For spiritual preparation think about your own understanding of angels as well as what is discussed in the Personal Views. Adapt the activities and content of the session to meet the needs of your group.

Commentary

A "call" to service in the Church is a "call" to ministry that comes in a variety of ways from slow realization to radical revelation. When God is trying to get our attention and call us to a particular task or vocation, we may not recognize it immediately.

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of Mary's encounter with Gabriel, known as the Annunciation: the announcement of Jesus' birth into the world. Coming "face to face" with an angel, as Mary did, is not an ordinary experience. Mary's call was certainly intense and clear.

Very few historical facts are available about Mary or Joseph. The infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke tell of their betrothal, but not

their marriage. In New Testament Palestine, marriage for Jews was a two-fold process, the first part a betrothal or engagement period. For young women like Mary, this took place usually between the ages of twelve and thirteen. A formal exchange of agreement to marry was given in the presence of witnesses. This formality gave the groom legal rights over the bride. Any relationship outside the betrothal would be considered adultery. The bride continued to live with her parents until the marriage took place, usually a year later.

Betrothal was tantamount to marriage. All of the taboos and privileges were accorded the betrothed couple. For example if the groom died before the marriage service, the bride was considered a widow. They did not yet live together and did not yet engage in an intimate marital relationship. If a young woman became pregnant before the marriage, she could be considered an adulterer and, therefore, put to death by stoning. Mary must have understood the consequences of the angel's announcement. Something about the angel Gabriel, clearly a messenger from God, made her listen and "fear not."

Angels are perceived today in at least two ways. In ancient times, they were seen as God's "messengers." They were also considered "spiritual beings." The Hebrew word for angel means "messenger" or "envoy." These messengers originally provided a way to

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—"The Annunciation," by Gustave Doré
- **Key Verse:** *And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."*—Luke 1:28
- **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
- **Voices**—Frederick Buechner
- **Daily Reflections**
- **Words to Remember**
- **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)

describe God's presence to human beings. Abraham, Sarah, Jacob and others encountered these messengers, and their lives were changed. Over time angels became definitive heavenly beings.

Years in exile among foreign cultures affected Jewish ideas about angels. Angels of various ranks and types were introduced and given names. In the gospels, angels spoke to many people. Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, and the wise men are but a few.

For further study refer to: Godwin, Burnham, and Brigelli, all of whom have written books on angels. Check a concordance or Bible dictionary for further information on angels in Scripture. Examine the differences and similarities of these encounters.

LECTOR'S TEXT

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:26-38

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Discussion on "call" may be difficult for youth of this age. Be prepared to be flexible and encourage creativity.
- The idea of the "virgin birth" and issues of sexuality could sidetrack you from the main issue: God's call and Mary's response.
- Types of angels can also detract from the main issue. In selecting illustrations for the Coming Together activity, avoid controversial figures, such as "Death Angels."
- **Discussion Starter:** How does God tell us what to do in our lives?

Personal Views

Think or write about your own understanding of angels. How have your ideas been influenced by the Bible, contemporary literature, and the media? What do you believe about angels? Where have you encountered God's mystery in your life? How has that encounter affected your life?

What differences do you find between Mary's culture and your own expectations about marriage, ages of those engaged or betrothed, and customs? What are the differences between the current understanding of "engagement" and the biblical "betrothal"? What might it be like today for a young woman of Mary's age if she told someone that she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit? Mary made a decision to accept a call to service. She chose to live with the consequences of her choice. What do you understand the consequences to be? What would they be today?

Pour into our hearts, O Lord, that we who have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ, announced by an angel to the virgin Mary, may by his cross and passion be brought to the glory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Annunciation

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 240

Coming Together

(Time est: 10 min)

Beforehand make large photocopies of different angels (11" X 17" if possible). Cut into puzzle pieces. Give each youth and leader at least two puzzle pieces as they enter the room. After at least four youth have arrived, ask them to begin piecing the puzzles together. After all the pieces are together, tape them to a wall.

When everyone is present, ask the youth to turn to Luke 1:26-38 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead in the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

O God,

You gave me strength when I was weak, and you helped me when times were hard. I ask you to forgive me because I did not choose your path from the beginning. I gave in to temptation, the kind that does not come from love. You sent an angel to help me, when my life was full of confusion. My life is no longer meaningless; I am filled with joy. I thank you for helping me to see the beauty of life, and ask your forgiveness because I could not see it sooner. Amen.

Nancy, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 38.*

(See page 2 for full text.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time est: 15-20 min)

Ask a young person to read the following quotation from Frederick Buechner (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

She struck the angel as hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone this child, but he'd been entrusted with a message to give her and he gave it.

He told her what the child was to be named, and who he was to be, and something about the mystery that was to come upon her. "You mustn't be afraid, Mary," he said.

As he said it, he only hoped she wouldn't notice that beneath the great golden wings he himself was trembling with fear to think that the whole future of creation hung now on the answer of a girl.

Ask for feedback on the youth's reaction to the quotation. Share with them your ideas about God's call to each individual. Let the youth know that call comes to each person in different ways. Some may experience a quiet awakening while others have a radical revelation. Review the scripture passage about Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel. Explain to them that this was Mary's "call" to service. Share with the group information about Mary's age and betrothal, and what could happen to a young woman who became pregnant during the betrothal period. Take time to talk about the differences concerning marriage age and betrothal/engagement that exist between Mary's world and today.

Mary chose to say "yes" to the angel. She then had to live with the consequences of her choice. Engage in a brief discussion about what that might have been like.

For further discussion:

- In what way have you ever felt "called" or compelled to do something important?
- Who are today's angel's or "messengers"?
- What kind of mysterious encounters have you had before?

Optional Activities

The following activities offer groups a wide range of choices. Consider the interests and strengths of youth and leaders and select those activity options which seem best suited to local time and talents.

Expressions

- **Role play:** Divide the class into groups of two or three. Ask the groups to plan a role play based on the story of Mary and Gabriel, but set in the present. Encourage them to think how the story would be different or the same if it

happened today. Give them five minutes to work on the play before presenting it to the whole class.

- **Art project:** Many artists have depicted Mary and her encounter with the angel Gabriel in paintings and drawings. Bring some examples to class. (You can also use the drawing in the Session Leaflet.) Ask the youth to draw their own interpretation using watercolor paints, magic markers, crayons, paper, and other art supplies.
- **Poetry:** Mary's song the "Magnificat" in *Luke 1:46-55* is a beautiful poem. Invite some of the group to write their own song of praise.

Games

- **Have you seen an angel?** This is a game based on "Do you love your neighbor?" Everyone sits in a circle. One person is selected to be the leader. The leader stands in front of one person and asks, "Have you seen an angel?" If "no," everyone has to get up and move at least two spaces away. If "yes," then the person being asked says, "and that angel is wearing (a particular color and article of clothing)," at which point anyone in the circle wearing that particular article must move to another seat. The person who asked the question also tries to find a chair while people are moving. The person left standing becomes the new leader.

Media

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

WEAVINGS

- Use this session during Advent or Christmas; introduce the term "annunciation."
- Consider using this session as part of a series about calls of various kinds and how we live into those calls.
- Angels are very much a part of our culture today. Some stores devote entire sections to angel replicas, stationary, books, and other related items. A popular television series revolves around a group of angels and their ministry on earth. There seems to be a hunger for God's messengers to be a part of our world. Be ready to discuss the differences between biblical angels and angels from today's culture.
- Ask the group if they believe in Guardian Angels. Encourage them to share personal experiences.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Annunciation (No. 3)

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 “Jesus of Nazareth” has a section on the angel’s visitation to Mary. Show this section to the group, and ask for comments.
- **Slides:** Purchase from a photo supply store blank slides and markers that can be used on the slides. Draw pictures on the slides to illustrate the Bible passage. Set up a slide projector to show the finished products.

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.

- Listen to a recording of the “Magnificat” by Bach or Vivaldi.
- Teach “Gabriel’s Message” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 265).
- Listen to Amy Grant’s song, “Angels.” (*Straight Ahead*, Myrrh Records, 1984)
- Choose any selection from *In Search of Angels*, a CD from Windham Hill.

Service

- **Visiting angels:** Get a list of your church’s shut-ins or contact a local nursing home. Suggest that the youth become “angels,” planning special activities each month. They could send letters, make cards, or bake and deliver cookies. Some could go once a month to read to shut-ins. The youth should decide what they will do and how often. They may choose to do something once or make a longer commitment.

Sharing

- **Other groups:** Suggest ways the group can share the session experience with the parish. For example, the slides or role plays could be shown to other groups.
- **Mural:** Invite younger children to join youth in creating a mural about angels.

Study

- **Commentary:** Use a Bible commentary to look up other places where people have encountered angels. Find out what was said and what happened.
- **Thesaurus:** Look up the word “call” in a thesaurus. What other words are listed and how do they fit the story of Mary and Gabriel?
- **Reading:** For more information about discernment, refer to *Listening Hearts*, by Suzanne Farnham (Morehouse Publishing, 1991).

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to p. 833 of *The Book of Common Prayer* and say together the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 3):

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

A Prayer attributed to St. Francis
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

From your observations, can the youth discuss what it is like to make decisions and live with the consequences? Can they understand the differences and similarities in Mary’s culture and that of their own? Do they understand the role of angels in the Bible?

Elizabeth & Mary: Someone to Talk to

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

The objective of this session is to use the story of Mary and Elizabeth to explore the role of mentors. Youth will be able to define mentor, describe characteristics to look for in choosing a mentor, and determine when and how to seek one.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on covenant relationship as a promise of trust. It highlights the relationship between a youth and an adult who is not a parent. Key names are Mary and Elizabeth. Key events are Mary's visit with Elizabeth and the two women's pregnancies. For spiritual preparation reflect on your understanding of mentors and their significance in your life. Also see the discussion in Personal Views.

Commentary

A covenant between two people implies a special promise that signals acceptance of certain codes of conduct. God's covenant with his people was initiated in the Old Testament beginning with Abraham and Moses: "I will be your God, and you will be my people." The relationship came to completion through the New Covenant defined by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. God expects this covenant relationship to be extended by Christians to their neighbors as an example of "right" relationship.

In the story told by Luke, Mary is depicted as much younger than her cousin Elizabeth. Despite the age gap, however, they have much in common. Both find themselves

pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Information about Elizabeth is found only in this story in Luke. She is the wife of Zechariah, a temple priest. She has been barren and is clearly past the age of giving birth. Yet, she becomes pregnant in circumstances similar to her ancestor Sarah.

In Luke's gospel, the scene shifts abruptly from Elizabeth to Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel. Although frightened, Mary responds positively to the angel's message and God's call. Mary then visits Elizabeth who proclaims that Mary is blessed, and that the child Elizabeth carries has recognized Mary's unborn child. In this moment of recognition, Mary and Elizabeth know they have nothing to hide from each other. Elizabeth shelters Mary, and both share fear and anticipation of the journey ahead.

During this sacred time, Elizabeth serves as a mentor for Mary. She is both a fellow traveler and a guide. Elizabeth also confirms and supports Mary's choice to serve God in this special and particular way.

For further study refer to: Elizabeth's story at the outset of Luke. See also *Keeping the Promise: a Mentoring Program for Confirmation in the Episcopal Church* by Andrew D. Parker.

THE STUDENT LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art: Block Prints for Sundays—Cycles A, B, C*
 - **Key Verse**—*In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.* Luke 1:39
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Mary Lou Sleevei, Sophocles, Henry Brooks Adams
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

"And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing is impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

—Luke 1:36-45, 56

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Some youth may have difficulty approaching adults for help. Suggest suitable adults to serve as mentors, such as coaches, scout leaders, teachers, neighbors, and relatives.
- Not all adults should be mentors. Help youth identify characteristics of qualified mentors.
- In consultation with the clergy and/or the Christian Education director, select adults in the congregation who would be willing to serve as mentors. Plan activities that would bring together these mentors and youth.
- **Discussion Starter:** Why is it hard to talk to adults or ask them for help?

Personal Views

Reflect on the a story of Mary and Elizabeth. Decide how Elizabeth may have served as a mentor for Mary. Think about the fears and joys they shared with each other. Both women were experiencing pregnancy for the first time, only one was very young and unmarried, and the other was very old and married. The physical aspect of being pregnant was perhaps more frightening to Elizabeth than to Mary, while societal judgements were probably more terrifying to Mary. Being able to share their feelings must have heightened the joy both experienced.

Think about the role older people have played in your life. Have you ever had any one serve as a mentor for you? What was that experience like? What was helpful? What was not helpful? Can you remember how you chose a mentor? What might a young person think about when choosing a mentor?

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

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

On one set of 3" X 5" index cards write the names of famous persons. On another set of cards put the occupations of those persons. For example: Mother Teresa - serves the poor in India; Michael

Jordan - basketball player; Winona Ryder - actress; Cal Ripken - baseball player. Make similar cards for people who do particular jobs or hold specific offices in your parish, such as a member or the head of the altar guild, the senior warden, a Sunday School teacher or coordinator, the rector.

As the youth enter the room ask them to draw a card from each set. After everyone is in the room, ask them to match the cards with people's names to the cards with occupations. The number of cards will depend on the number in your class: each youth should have two to three sets of matching cards when the activity is over.

When everyone is present, ask the youth to turn to Luke 1:36-45, 56 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read together the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

O God,

I had closed my mind to your calls. I have tried to open my heart and listen to you. I fear that I am not in tune to your knowing call. I am worried about so many things that I have forgotten to listen to you, God. Forgive me because I have put aside what is most important, my faith in you. And lead me to the special person to whom I will tell only the truth, confess my sins, and share happy times with. Lead me, O Lord, so that I may better understand your righteous ways, and so I may come in peace to your everlasting and loving kingdom. Amen

Nancy, Grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 36 through 45, and verse 56.*

(Full text on p.2.)

Lector: *The word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Share with the youth your understanding about covenants as promises of trust and expectations between people. Talk about times when a person might need the help and guidance of someone older or someone who has more experience. Introduce the term mentor.

Retell the story of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth. Ask volunteers to read part of the poem *Elizabeth and Mary* by Mary Lou Sleeve (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Pious legend holds that Mary,
keeping her Secret to herself,
took to the hills
to assist her old cousin,
then six months along.

In the days between the old and new,
each became her sister's keeper,
Tears and fears
were safe between Elizabeth and Mary
as awesome joy.
Each surely needed to let herself go.
The two grew as friends,
working and praying and resting in God.

Ask the youth for feedback on the poem and the gospel story. What did Mary want from Elizabeth? What kind of guidance could Elizabeth give Mary? How was Elizabeth a mentor for Mary?

On a large piece of paper, record characteristics of adults they feel comfortable going to for guidance or help. Explore situations in which they would seek assistance, and record them on a separate piece of paper. To help them get started, ask if anyone is in scouts, plays a sport, etc. Encourage youth to share their experiences of seeking advice and help from adults other than parents.

For further discussion:

- When have you ever asked an adult for help?
- How could Mary have helped Elizabeth who was also facing her first pregnancy?

Optional Activities

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

Expressions

- **Limericks:** Write a limerick or create a funny poem about mentors.
- **Collage:** Bring in magazines, poster board, glue and scissors. Create a collage of pictures and words that show youth seeking help or getting guidance from adults.
- **Photos:** Stage and take pictures of adults and youth working together. Use an instant camera if possible.
- **Learning from others:** Invite a representative from a mentoring program in the community to speak to the youth.

Games

- **Trust walk:** Trust is an important part of a covenant relationship. Pair the youth in the class. Blindfold one in each pair. Give the pairs careful instructions about how to care for one another. Let them walk around the room or hallway, with the one who can see carefully guiding the one who is blindfolded. Switch places after a few minutes. When both have had a turn, talk about the experience.

WEAVINGS

- This session can be used prior to the beginning of a mentoring program during the confirmation year.
- Covenant is not a word we often use. What other expressions mean the same thing? Gangs have expectations about their relationships. For instance, if you show disrespect, you could die. How are covenant relationships with God and with our neighbor different?
- Youth have daily experience with adults through scouts, sports, and school. Distinguish the differences between these relationships and those within the church. Are the rules different? What is the nature of promise keeping? What happens when you fail?
- Prominent figures in politics, business, sports and other fields often refer to mentors who have been important in their lives. Broadway composer Stephen Sondheim, for example, talks freely about the importance of composer Oscar Hammerstein in his life. Look for other examples in the newspaper or on television while preparing this lesson.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Annunciation (No. 3)

What made it easier to lead?
What made it easier to trust the person who was leading?

- **Spring back:** Ask youth to find a partner and stand facing each other, a little more than arm's length apart. Instruct them to stretch their arms out in front of them with their palms facing forward. While keeping their bodies as straight as possible and their feet in place, they are to fall forward, catching each other by the palms of their hands. Have pairs hold that position for a while and then push off so they return to a standing position. After taking a step backward, repeat the pattern. Keep moving partners back until they can successfully complete the activity. After three cycles, ask: What made this activity succeed? How did you feel as you moved further apart from your partner? What else did you learn from this game? Who are the key people in your life who help you stand up and spring back when you fall?

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 laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Watch part of the "Karate Kid," and talk about the relationship between the karate master and his student. How was that a mentor relationship?
- **Newspapers:** Bring in copies of the last week's newspapers. Find and clip articles about youth and adults working together.
- **Publishing:** Publish a youth newspaper with articles about youth and adults working together.

Music

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

- Learn "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 711).
- Read together or sing "Lead Me, Guide Me" (*Gather*, 400).
- Using a piano, teach the youth a simple duet like "Heart and Soul." Ask how the duet mirrors the mentoring relationship.

Service

- **Working with a mentor:** Make a list of various activities within the parish in which youth might like to participate. (For example: outreach projects, altar guild, ushering, grounds keeping, visiting shut-ins) Ask each youth to choose an activity. Connect them with previously selected adults to serve as mentors in their chosen project. When the youth complete their project or participate for at least a month in an activity, let them share their experience with the group.

Sharing

- **Communicating:** Use the parish newsletter or bulletin board to highlight moments from mentoring relationships or to show the fruits of intergenerational ministry.

Study

- **Dictionary:** Look up the word mentor in the dictionary. Compare what the class has learned with the definition.

- **Session Leaflet:** Look at the youth commentary about mentors in the Session Leaflet (p. 2). Did this group have similar thoughts?

Voices

The ideal condition would be, I admit, that men should be right by instinct; but since we are all likely to go asking the reasonable thing is to learn from those who can teach.
—Sophocles

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.
—Henry Brooks Adams

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read the prayer below.

Leader: *Let us pray.*
O Savior Christ, in whose way of love lies the secret of all life, and the hope of all people, we pray for quiet courage to match this hour. We did not choose to be born or to live in such and age; but let its problems challenge us, its discoveries exhilarate us, its injustices anger us, its vigor renew us, for your Kingdom's sake.

Anglican Cycle of Prayer 1996
Leader: *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth define mentoring? Can they identify characteristics they would look for in a mentor? Can they name a time they have sought help? Can youth think of a time when they might seek the guidance of an adult in the future?

Follow Me: Join Us

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

This session focuses on Jesus' call to twelve people with different personalities to share in his ministry. Youth will be able to appreciate the fact that different personalities and gifts are needed in the Church; they also will realize that their individual contributions are important to the mission of the Church.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on historical and legendary background about the twelve apostles. Key names are Peter, James, John, Judas Iscariot. For spiritual preparation, think about your call to lead this class and consider ideas in the Personal Views.

Commentary

Jesus called twelve people to follow him and share his ministry as recorded in *Matthew 10:1-4*, *Mark 3:12-19*, *Luke 6:12-15* and *Acts 1:12-26*. Slight discrepancies in the makeup of the disciples are found among the references; the gospels of Matthew and Mark list Thaddaeus among the 12, while Luke lists Judas, son of James. The Book of Acts recounts the drawing of lots for Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot after his betrayal.

Jesus gathered around him many followers. They varied in strength of loyalty and commitment. Early tradition strongly held that twelve particular individuals had close contact with Jesus, with an inner circle that included Peter, James and John who had a more intimate relationship with Jesus. But the various lists of names

suggest that the group may have been larger than just twelve. During specific stories in Luke, especially in the resurrection narratives, we become aware of women being among the followers of Jesus.

The words "disciple" and "apostle" are often used interchangeably. "Disciple" commonly refers to one of the twelve who surrounded Jesus, including Judas. "Apostle" refers to the twelve after the resurrection when Matthias replaced Judas and also refers to Paul. According to Webster's dictionary, "disciple" is "a follower of Jesus" and "apostle" refers to "one sent on a mission."

In Mark, we find that the disciples were called to three tasks: 1) to share life with Jesus; 2) to preach; 3) to drive out demons. By knowing Jesus personally, they were called to share his vision and ministry, witness to his power, and to participate in his mission. In addition, the apostles were sent out to share Jesus' teachings with others. Finally, they were given authority over evil.

Scripture and history reveal little about the lives of these 12 people. Tradition tells us more about their legendary mission to the Church. Finally, they were given authority over evil.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art: Block Prints for Sundays—Cycles A, B, C*
 - **Key Verse**—*They came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message. . . —Mark 3:13b-14a*
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Dietrick Bonhoeffer, Isaiah, *Listening Hearts*
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

—Mark 3:13-19a

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth may wonder why Jesus called Judas, knowing that Judas would later betray Jesus. Judas was neither the first nor the last to fail to meet the challenge of God's call. Ask the youth if they have ever felt strongly about doing something—a mission project, for example—and not carried through on it.
- Jesus' call to the disciples came from one person to another. Youth may question their ability to hear God's call from the Holy Spirit. Be ready to discuss the different ways we can hear that call.
- **Discussion Starter:** What would it be like to be asked by Jesus to be a disciple?

Personal Views

Read the Contemporary Collects for Holy Days on pages 237-245 in *The Book of Common Prayer* to gain a better sense of the contribution the 12 disciples made to the mission of the Church. Each played a different role. As with the disciples, our different personalities can be complementary or adversarial to one another. In the beginning of the book of Acts, Peter and Paul went their separate ways, following their visions of the mission of the church. There were also those who “teamed” up together: Simon & Jude, Mary & Martha, Paul & Barnabas.

Christians need not get caught up in personality conflicts that result in losing sight of the bigger picture: the spreading of the Good News. Through the Baptismal Covenant, each follower is “called” into God's service. Not only are we marked as Christ's own forever, but we are also initiated into the fellowship of believers. Both individually and corporately, Christians begin their journeys by entering into a covenant with God and others. Those who are baptized both “follow” as well as “join” other believers in the mission of the Church.

We give thanks to you, O Lord our God, for all your servants and witnesses of time past: for Abraham, the father of believers, and Sarah his wife; for Moses, the lawgiver, and Aaron, the priest; for Miriam and Joshua, Deborah and Gideon, and Samuel with Hannah his mother; for Isaiah and all the prophets; for Mary the mother of our Lord; for Peter and Paul and all the apostles; for Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene; for Stephen, the first martyr, and all the martyrs and saints in every age and in every land. In your

mercy, O Lord our God, give us, as you gave them, the hope of salvation and the promise of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the first-born of many from the dead. Amen.

For the Saints and Faithful Departed

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 838

Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Before class photocopy Panel 2 from Resource Poster 6, or write the information on a large piece of paper. Hang Resource Poster 1 with the Apostle's shields where it can be easily seen. Provide each person as they enter the room with the game sheet from Panel 2, or hang your copy prominently in the room. Invite the students to match the descriptions with the correct Bible passage. If you do not have access to Resource Posters, place a blank piece of paper on a table. Ask the youth to write down the names of the disciples they can recall.

When all are present ask youth to find *Mark 3:13-19a* in their Bibles. Select a lector and read together the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Thank you God for making me a part of your heavenly Kingdom. Thank you for guiding me on the right path and showing me how to make the right choices. Show me how to make the right choices. Show me how to use my talents for you so others can see your love through me. Your love is greatly appreciated by the people of the world that need it. Through Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Ashley, grade 7

Lector: *A reading from The Gospel of Mark, chapter 3, verses 13 through 19a.*

(Full text on page 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time:15-20 min)

Discuss the answers the youth found in the Coming Together matching game. Refer to Resource Poster 1 of the Apostle's Shield and see if they were able to match the shields to the correct apostle based on the scripture passages. The design of the shields comes primarily from tradition. Share some of the stories behind the shields (Panel 3 of Resource Poster 6). Note the differences of the disciples, but emphasize that all were called.

Pass out blank paper and markers. Ask the youth to make their own shield, similar to the ones on the poster. Explain that they should decide what they want to be remembered for and then create symbols to convey those ideas. Encourage them to be as creative as possible. When everyone has completed their shields, invite youth to share their designs with the group.

For further discussion:

- What do you think attracted the twelve disciples to Jesus?
- What is the difference between being "called" and "joining" a group?
- How are we like disciples? How are we different?
- How are we a part of this church? What can we do to further the mission of 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 which seem best suited to local time and talents. Remember, no one can do everything!

Expressions

- **Banners:** Gather materials for the youth to make banners of the

disciples to hang in the room or another appropriate place in the church building.

- **Writing:** Select a tradition about one of the apostles and write a poem or short story based on the information in Resource Poster 6. (You can also find other references with information about the apostles.)

Games

- **Name game:** Everyone sits in a circle. The first person says his or her name and something he or she likes that begins with the first letter of his or her first name. ("I'm Linda and I like to laugh.") The second person does the same, AND continues, "This is my friend, Linda who likes to laugh." Each person in the circle has a turn, so that the last person must name all the people before and the things they like.

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 laws covering public performances of copyrighted material.

- **Video:** Show the segment of the movie *Forest Gump* about his run across America. Why do people follow him?
- **Print:** Bring in newspapers or news magazines. Ask youth to find stories about celebrities and famous people. Talk about people with charisma. Who are the heroes in our world today? What one person would the youth like to meet? Why? For an optional closing, lay the newspapers or magazines on the floor, ask the

WEAVINGS

- This session could be used in conjunction with All Saints Day.
- This session discusses a distinction between following (or being called) and joining. We join many things—clubs, sports groups, among others. However, we are "called" to be a part of a faith community, our churches, and other groups, such as mission and outreach organizations. The difference between the two concepts is in the discernment process that takes place: taking time to talk to God to find God's will.
- Our culture offers many opportunities to be involved in a wide range of activities. Sometimes we find that we have joined so many groups we don't have time for important things in our lives, such as prayer or time with families. Before joining another group, no matter how worthy, take time to see if God is calling you there. Be still and give God time to direct your life.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Shield of the Apostles (No. 1)
- Matching Game (Panel 2, No. 6)
- The Apostles (Panel 3, No. 6)

youth to stand on an article and pray for those in the news.

Music

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

- Sing or read the hymn, "O, Jesus I have promised" *The Hymnal 1982*, 655.
- Sing together "God has chosen me," in *Gather, Vol. II*, 488.
- Listen to the song "Follow Me" by John Denver.

Service

- **Loaves and fishes:** The disciples helped Jesus feed a crowd of hungry people. Invite learners to collect food and work together to distribute it to a local food bank or shelter.

Sharing

- **Youth prayers:** Invite youth to write their own Prayers of the People (BCP, pp. 383-393). The prayers for the Faithful Departed could be used as examples.

Study

- **Comparisons:** Using a thesaurus, ask the students to compare words such as: "disciple" and "apostle," "follow" and "join," "ministry" and "mission," "membership" and "belong," "called" and

"chosen," "invited" and "welcomed," "individual" and "corporate." What are the similarities and differences? What is the effect of using different words?

- **Song writing:** The hymn "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" is illustrated in storybook form by that title (Morehouse Publishing, 1991). Ask the youth to write their own verses; ask what occupations they would choose for this song.

Voices

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

A call may not be so much a call to "do" as to "be."

—*Listening Hearts*, p. 9

. . . I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me.

Isaiah 45: 4

God calls each of us. There is a variety of calls, and no one call is inherently better or higher than any other.

—*Listening Hearts*, p.8

The call goes forth, and is at once followed by the response of obedience. The response of the disciples is an act of obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus.

Dietrick Bonhoeffer

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to p. 819 in *The Book of Common Prayer* and read together the following prayer:

Leader: *Let us pray.*

O God, you prepared your disciples for the coming of the Spirit through the teaching of your Son Jesus Christ: Make the hearts and minds of your servants ready to receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that they may be filled with the strength of his presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those about to be baptized
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 819

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth identify the differences in the personalities of the twelve disciples? Do the youth now see these twelve as more human and real? Can the youth distinguish between following (or being called) and joining? Do they understand that it takes different people with different gifts to fulfill the whole mission of the Church?

The Rich Young Ruler: Missed Opportunities

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

The focus of this session is the freedom people have to live creatively in God's love by following God's will. By not responding to God, opportunities to grow and have new life are lost. Youth will be able to recognize the things—material and intangible—that keep them from God. They will also explore ways to remove obstacles blocking their relationship with God.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this Session focuses on choosing to enter into relationship (covenant) with God. Key people are Jesus and the rich young ruler. For spiritual preparation consider the choices you have made that brought you closer to God. Which ones have led you away? Personal Views includes other ideas about obstacles that keep us from God.

Commentary

The passage in *Mark 10:17-22* continues the discussion about what it takes to inherit the kingdom of God. Many commentaries describe it as "The Great Refusal." In the story a young ruler approaches Jesus and asks him what he must do to inherit eternal life. The man, known by tradition as the rich young ruler, appears to be concerned with the letter of the law, doing things right, even moral goodness. He is portrayed as one who respects and follows the commandments. He assumes that Jesus' teaching is based on the accomplishment of these moral

imperatives, thus the compliment of calling Jesus "good."

Jesus shows his humility by pointing to God and his ultimate mission on earth. Jesus emphasizes social obligations and human responsibilities, to which the rich man makes an astonishing claim to have fulfilled. Jesus sees great potential in this person and invites him to join the disciples.

But the choice is a difficult one: free himself of wealth and possessions and follow Jesus. Great crises call for drastic demands. The young ruler sorrowfully turns away, missing a great opportunity.

This passage is not about wealth, as it first appears, but about eternal life. Like the young ruler in the story, everyone has obstacles that keep them from accepting God's grace and blessings. Sometimes people believe, as the man did, that eternal life is a result of correctness or moral goodness. Jesus sees much to love in the young ruler, and even invites the man to join him. But first Jesus tests the young ruler's priorities. The young ruler sorrowfully turns away, missing a great opportunity to be close to Jesus.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Clip Art: Block Print for Sundays—Cycles A, B, C*
 - **Key Verse**—*Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."*
—Mark 10:21
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Psalm, Leo Rippey, Shakespeare
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

—Mark 10:17-22

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Boundaries can be good. In fact young people today are telling us by their action and words that they want limitations, rules to live by that they can push against and measure themselves against. It is by pushing against established boundaries that youth find their own internal controls. In the absence of boundaries they often feel lost and abandoned.
- We cannot change the behavior of another. But we can help that person to see things from a different perspective which often leads to changed behavior.
- **Discussion Starter:** Are there sacrifices too great for us? How many chances do you think we get to respond to God?

Personal Views

The passage in Mark is primarily about entering into a covenant relationship with God. A covenant has conditions and blessings. Jesus asked the young ruler to respond and receive the blessings that would have followed. We all have obstacles that keep us from accepting God's blessings. Scripture says Jesus looked at him and loved him, but the ruler chooses to go away. He is sad because he feels the sacrifice is too great.

Sometimes we miss opportunities to live in God's grace because we feel the sacrifice God is asking of us is too great. Jesus reminds us that all is not what it appears to be on earth: in the kingdom the first will be last and the last will be first. The message of hope is in the sorrow of the young ruler. Is it possible that he will respond differently later in life? We are given countless opportunities to accept God's grace.

A living covenant is a daily relationship. How do we continue to surrender to God daily? How do we free ourselves to follow Christ, and thus live in God's many blessings?

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into our hearts, to direct and rule us according to your will, to comfort us in all our afflictions, to defend us from all error, and to lead us into all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Noonday Collect

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 107

Coming Together

(Time est: 10 min)

Display the Resource Poster (No. 5) of Christ Preaching. As the youth arrive, invite them to comment on a graffiti sheet what they think Jesus might be preaching about in the picture by Rembrandt.

When everyone is present, ask the youth to turn to Mark 10:17-22 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, thank you for always being beside us when the going gets tough. We never will be alone as long as you are here to walk with us on our journey of life. Help us to have the courage to say yes to you even when there is peer pressure and we feel alone. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Ashley, grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, verses 17 through 22.*

(Full text on p. 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time est: 15-20 min)

At another time and place Jesus said it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom. While wealth is certainly one thing that keeps people out of the kingdom, it is certainly not the only thing.

Ask each person to think about what keeps them from really following God? It may be a bad habit, a friendship, hours listening to music or sitting at a computer screen. After giving the youth several minutes to think about obstacles that keep them from God, ask them to write their ideas on a small piece of paper.

Ask the youth to bring the slips of paper with them and stand in a circle. Pass around a needle with a long thread attached. Let each person add their "obstacle" to the thread by passing the needle through the center.

When everyone is finished, hang the string across the front of the room. Ask the youth how they can remove the obstacle on the string from their lives.

For further discussion:

- Why do you think Jesus listed the commandments in the story in Mark?
- Why is it hard to accept God's grace?

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

- **Follow Me:** Use a ten foot strip of newsprint; at one end write "Reasons to Follow Us to Church." Give each person a marker and ask them to write or draw a picture of at two or more reasons why a person might follow them to Church. Put the banner on display in a prominent place.
- **Burden to carry:** Begin by telling a story of a person who had a large burden (sack) on his/her back. As the person walks along the sack becomes heavier and heavier. It is so big that the person cannot get through the door of the church. Invite the class to continue the story. At the end of one minute, the next person expands the story by adding characters and plot. Encourage them to be creative. Each person should get at least one turn. What might be in the sack? What could the person do to lighten the load?
- **Time capsule:** Make a time capsule. Ask everyone to make a list of things they value. Mark the list indicating what they would sacrifice for God.

Games

- **Treasure Hunt:** Have a treasure hunt. Divide the youth into teams, and hide a 'prize' that can only be found by following clues that will lead to the treasure. Each team should have their own set of clues. Afterwards discuss "the treasures of the heart."

Media

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

- **Video:** Show a portion of the video *Trading Places*. Why do we find such things funny? Who is really happier in this movie?
- **Print:** Turn to the classified ads in the newspaper. What kinds of items are listed in the Lost and Found section? What items would we value enough to list in the newspaper if we lost them?

Music

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

- Sing or read the hymn, "I Surrender All" (*Lift Every Voice & Sing II*, 133).
- Sing or read the hymn, "'Tis the Gift to be Simple" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554).
- Listen to a recording of *If I Were a Rich Man* from *Fiddler on the Roof*.

WEAVINGS

- This session can be used at the beginning of Lent. Discuss what "giving up" something for Lent might really mean to the youth.
- We usually think of "possessions" in terms of material goods. Some have great value, such as jewelry, our homes and automobiles, furniture, art collections, among others. Others have little market value but great sentimental value, such as photographs and other mementoes. There are other kinds of possessions, however. We also have the love of our families, good health, and friends. What kind of possession did Jesus ask the young ruler to part with?
- The message we get from cultural sources has little to say about giving up anything, except maybe excess pounds. We are encouraged to accumulate more things that are bigger and better. The more ways we find to add comfort and security to our lives, however, often keep us from turning to God who offers true comfort and security.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Christ Preaching (No. 5)

Service

- **Clean sweep:** Invite the youth, with parental permission, to clean out their closets at home and donate their old toys and extra clothing to a shelter for battered women, teen-age run-aways or other such place in your community. Or set aside one Saturday for a church rummage sale to sell old clothes and toys; use the proceeds for a church or community mission project.

Sharing

- **Hang it!** If the class made the banner or the time capsule for the Expressions activity, find a way for them to share them with the rest of the congregation.

Study

- **Statistics:** Research some statistics on wealth and poverty in the United States and the World today. How does our country stack up against the rest of the world? How does our community compare to other neighborhoods?
- **One day at a time:** Discuss what kinds of situations make people live one day at a time. It might include being terminally ill or having addictions. Some cultures do not place high value on possessions. What kinds of lives do people from these culture lead? What do they value?

Voices

Discuss the ways in which the voices reflect the dilemma that the rich young ruler faced.

Though my flesh and my heart
should waste away,
God is the strength of my heart
and my portion for ever.
Psalm 73:26

It's easier to change a
perception than a behavior.

Leo Rippey

To be or not to be. That is the
question.

Shakespeare

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read the following prayer from *The Book of Occasional Services*, p. 257.

Leader: *Let us pray.
May God the Holy Spirit, who
helps us in our weakness, and
intercedes for the saints in
accordance with the Father's
will: Teach you to pray as you
ought to pray; strengthen you in
purity of faith, in holiness of life,
and in perfectness of love; and
bind you ever more and more
closely to the Father through the
Son. Amen.*

Prayer of Special Vocation
The Book of Occasional Services, p. 257

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Did the youth sense that there are obstacles that keep each of us from God? Were they able to think of times when they had a choice to respond to God's call?

Paul & Barnabas: Conflict in Relationships

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

This session focuses on conflict within covenant relationships. Youth will be able to talk about the nature and resolution of the conflict between Paul and Barnabas. They will also be able to address conflicts within their own relationships.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on how conflict may be a part of covenant relationships. Key people are Paul and Barnabas. For spiritual preparation consider your own “covenant” relationships and the conflict you have experienced as discussed in Personal Views.

Commentary

A covenant relationship implies trust and understanding between the people involved. Sometimes that relationship can break down or at the very least experience a few bumps along the way.

Barnabas is responsible for bringing Saul (Paul), a fellow Greek-speaking Jewish believer in Jesus, to the other apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). He tells them how Paul has been brought to the Lord through his experience on the road to Damascus, an experience in which Paul is blinded, has a vision of Christ and then regains his sight. We know nothing of Barnabas' conversion, only that he was well versed in the activities of the Christian movement in Syria where he encountered Paul.

According to Acts, Barnabas and Paul form a partnership in ministry, spreading the gospel on a mission tour to Cyprus and the Iconium

region of Asia Minor, including Antioch, Pamphylia and Tarsus (Acts 13:1-14:28). Their last appearance together is in Jerusalem. Here they find themselves on the same side of an important debate about circumcision (Acts 15:1-35). Together with Peter, Paul and Barnabas agree that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised to be saved.

After the debate in Jerusalem, Paul suggests to Barnabas that they “return and visit the believers in every city where they proclaimed the word of the Lord.” (Acts 15:36) Barnabas wants to take his cousin, John Mark, with them. Apparently John Mark had deserted them earlier in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13 & 15:38). “The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company.” (Acts 15:39) While the disagreement may have been intense, so is their regard for one another. They resolve their conflict by going separate ways, each continuing to do God's work with others.

For further study: The book of Acts paints a fuller picture of the relationship between Paul and Barnabas. Read it while referring to maps of the region to chart their travels.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Paul and Barnabas*, Elizabeth Wolf
 - **Key Verse**—*The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company.* Acts 15:39a
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Kahlil Gibran, Thomas Merton, Sam Portaro
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch. After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work.

The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord.

—Acts 15:35a, 36-40

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Change is the only constant for this age group. Consequently, young people often find themselves at odds with friends as well as family. Improving communication skills will help them with their relationships.
- Talking about the conflict between Paul and Barnabas enables youth to examine conflicts in their own lives in a non-threatening context. Because youth are self-conscious, be sensitive to detours in discussion.
- When trying to communicate with someone, which is easier to talk about—what you are feeling or what you are thinking?
- Talking about conflict can raise issues of domestic violence or abuse. Youth coming from dysfunctional homes may perceive this type of "conflict" as normal. Contact your priest if you are concerned about a youth.
- **Discussion Starter:** When you are having trouble in a relationship what is the first thing you want to do? To say?

Personal Views

Conflict can destroy relationships, or it can strengthen the ties that bind commitments. The way we handle conflict can often cause more problems than the conflict itself. Knowing how we usually react to conflict and improving our communication skills will help us work toward resolving the unresolvable.

Think about your conflict style. Do you avoid conflict by withdrawing? Do you try to overpower your "opponents?" Do you try to smooth things over to keep harmony? Do you always seek a compromise? Do you see conflict as a problem to be solved by seeking solutions together?

Are your own communication skills effective? Using "I" messages to convey our feelings sometimes helps iron out communication problems that contribute to conflict. Try out "I" messages with someone you trust. Instead of saying: "You made me feel

_____ when you insisted on _____," say: "I feel _____ when you insist on _____."

By turning the statement around, your statement becomes less an accusation and more an observation. The person you are addressing is often less defensive and more able to deal with the issue at hand.

When discouraged, think about how Paul and Barnabas resolved their conflict and how they both were able to further the mission of the Church.

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move, and have our being; We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever

walking in your sight through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Collect for Guidance
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 100

Coming Together

(Time: 10 min)

Give each youth a copy of Panel 1 of Resource Poster 6 entitled Conflict Styles or a blank piece of paper. Let them decide which of the animals best describes their conflict style at home, with friends, or at school.

When everyone is present, ask a youth to serve as lector. Read the prayer together (p. 2 of the Session Leaflet).

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Thank you, God, for all your creations. We will work to keep them. Together we share your will, but as one, we understand your will. We will work together with you to teach others to understand. We will work alone with you to understand ourselves. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

—Brittany, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from the Book of Acts, Chapter 15, verses 35a, 36-40.*
(Text on page 2.)

Lector: *The word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Take a few minutes to discuss the youth's evaluations of their conflict styles. Find out if others in the group agree.

Discuss relationships and the need for a certain level of trust and understanding. Even the best of friends, however, have conflicts. This is a part of being human. Often, when people disagree they feel an emotional distance from one another that can be frightening. Paul and Barnabas found that the only way to settle their differences was to go separate ways. Ask the youth if this is similar to their experiences.

Introduce the concept of “I” and “You” messages printed on the bottom of the conflict style sheet. Ask the group to make up “I” and “You” messages that Paul and Barnabas may have used. Divide the group into pairs and give each pair a conflict situation on a 3" X 5" card that you made beforehand. Make enough for each pair of youths to have one card—if 20 youth are in your group, you need ten cards. Situations should include conflict between: a parent and a child, two friends, players on a sports team, and a teacher (or some other authority figure) and a youth. Give them time to share their solutions with the group.

For further discussion:

- In what relationships do you experience the most conflict?
- Paul and Barnabas experienced much conflict in their relationship. One disagreement was so intense that they chose to go their separate ways. Was this failure or success? Do you feel like you have failed if the only way to resolve a conflict is to end the relationship?

Optional Activities

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

Expressions

- **Role Play:** Ask youth to think about a conflict they have had with a friend or parent. Ask them to create a role play with another youth using the “I” message formula to resolve the conflict.

- **Map making:** Create a map using Resource Poster 2 that shows the journeys Paul and Barnabas took together.
- **Color me angry:** Before the group arrives, gather paint, construction paper, scissors, and glue. Ask youth to illustrate what conflict looks and feels like to them using just color and shapes.

Games

- **A knotty situation:** Play the game of “Knots.” Youth stand in a circle and take the hands of two different people, but not those of the person directly next to them. (Hint: to see if everyone is hooked up, let one person squeeze a hand and pass it on. If everyone’s hands get squeezed, continue the game.) After everyone is connected, try to undo the knot without letting go.
- **Whispers:** Sit in a circle. Whisper a phrase about today’s Bible story in the ear of one youth and let them whisper the message they heard to the person next to them. Go around the circle at least once. The last person shares what they heard.

Media

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

- **Video:** Preview the 1982 film *The Chosen*. Show the clip in which the two boys end their friendship after a disagreement.

WEAVINGS

- This session could be used prior to a discussion about contemporary issues that divide the church, such as sexuality, abortion, or capital punishment.
- Most people try to avoid conflicts whenever possible. Ironically, the avoidance of conflict is often more damaging than the conflict itself. Friendships, marriages, and other relationships suffer when conflicts simmer under the surface. Be aware of disagreements you may have with a friend or spouse; face conflict together to keep anger from boiling over.
- Violence in our society often begins with a small disagreement. Be aware of incidences in the media about neighbors fighting over boundaries, ethnic groups nurturing real or imagined slights, nations putting vengeance above peace. Share your observations with the youth.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Tentmakers (No. 4)
- Map of New Testament Lands (No. 2)
- Conflict Styles (Panel 1: No. 6)

- **Extra!** Write a special edition of an imaginary newspaper focusing on “the break-up” of Paul and Barnabas.

Music

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

- Learn “Make us servants of your peace,” *The Hymnal 1982*, 593.
- Play Cat Stevens’ “Peace Train.”
- Listen to a recording of Simon and Garfunkle’s “Bridge Over Troubled Waters.”

Service

- **Fund raising:** Many communities have non-profit centers for peace and justice offering conflict resolution as a service. Plan a fund-raising event for the center.

Sharing

- **Put on a skit:** Share the skits about conflict that the youth have created with Sunday school classes or their parents. Include in the presentation observations youth made about resolving conflict.
- **“I” messages:** Teach another class how to use “I” messages to help with communication.

Study

- **Studying the Bible:** Find out where Paul and Barnabas went after they separated. Locate their destinations on a New Testament Map (Resource Poster N. 2).
- **Conflict in the Bible:** Look up the story of Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis, chapters 32 and 33. How was conflict a part of their relationship? What could they have done to resolve their differences?
- **Dictionary work:** Find the definitions for the words “conflict” and “covenant” in a dictionary. Can covenants survive conflict?

Voices

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

Let there be spaces in your togetherness.

Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

—Kahlil Gibran

As long as we are on earth, the love that unites us will bring us suffering by our very contact with one another because this love is the resetting of a body of broken bones—even saints cannot live with saints on this earth without some anguish. . . . There are two things people can do about the pain of the disunion with other people—they can love or they can hate.

—Thomas Merton
(Adapted)

The word *conflict* means, literally, “to strike together.” Conflict is the collision of differences.

Conflict is a necessary element of the created order by which all life is sustained.

—Sam Portaro

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Turn to p. 816 in *The Book of Common Prayer* and read the following prayer.

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. Amen.

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

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can youth see the value in the solution Paul and Barnabas found in their conflict? Are youth able to talk about and identify their own conflict style? Are they able to state any “I” messages? Are youth able to talk about how they might use “I” messages for themselves?

Paul & Timothy: Learning from Each Other

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

The focus of this session is on the importance of intergenerational relationships. Youth will be able to reflect on the value of relationships with people of all ages.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session describes Paul's and Timothy's partnership in the work of the early church. Key names are Timothy and Paul. Read the Personal Views section and think about people you respect and why you respect them.

Commentary

Timothy, who came from Asia Minor, had a Jewish mother and Greek father, who along with his grandmother, was converted on Paul's first visit to Lystra. Timothy became an associate to Paul when Paul returned to Lystra on his second visit.

The apostle Paul and his colleague Timothy shared the responsibility of overseeing Christian missions and churches. Timothy's young age raised many issues for the communities in which they worked. Paul refused to let "youthfulness" be a stumbling block.

Paul called Timothy his "son in the faith." Their companionship was evident by Paul's mention of Timothy in other letters (*II Corinthians 1:1*, *Philemon 1*, *Hebrews 13:23*). They shared a unique, collegial relationship evidenced by respect for one another's gifts and talents. Some scholars believe that Paul's departure was due to Timothy having received the laying on of hands and Paul's trust in the young man as a leader in Paul's absence.

The laying on of hands may have enabled Timothy to become Paul's successor in supervising various churches. Paul's correspondence supports this assumption. He was intimately acquainted with the community and often could anticipate what Timothy would experience. Paul was able to offer encouragement as a partner in the faith, especially when Timothy's authority and youthfulness were challenged. He supported his younger colleague by offering warnings about false teachers, instruction on doctrine, and advice on pastoral issues.

Scripture indicates that Timothy went at least part way on Paul's journey to Jerusalem and appeared with Paul in Rome. From his letters, Paul showed that he not only liked Timothy, but also had great respect for him.

Personal Views

Paul is Timothy's mentor. He has lived longer than Timothy and had more experience in the faith community. Yet he treats Timothy as a respected co-worker and a fellow pilgrim in the faith. He respects the unique gifts Timothy brings to the church, including his "youthfulness."

When working with youth, it is important to see and respond to them as you would any other baptized member of the faith community. The baptismal vows and promises are the same for everyone. Adults have wisdom and life experience that youth at this age are just beginning to notice.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—"Scenes from the Life of St. Paul" Monreale, Duomo
 - **Key Verse**—*Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* | Timothy 4:12
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Book of Joel, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bob Dylan, Robert Frost
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

I Timothy 4:12-16

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Younger youth are beginning to explore relationships with adults beyond their parents and teachers, often choosing a grandparent. Help them think through other possibilities for discovering intergenerational relationships.
- While relationships with older adults can be important to youth, they must be able to discern when a relationship is healthy and when it may lead to danger. Discuss the qualities of a healthy relationship with adults so youth will have a model.
- **Discussion Starter:** Who has had the most influence on your life other than your parents?

When adults validate the ministry of young people, they may be cultivating a would-be Timothy for the building up of the body of Christ. Not only can young people become leaders, but they can also become mentors who pass faith in Jesus Christ to the next generation.

The Church is one of the last true settings for inter-generational gatherings. Where would the Church be without the mixture of youth and adults?

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 280

Coming Together

(Time est: 10 min)

Before the class begins display the New Testament Map (Resource Poster No. 2) in an obvious place. As the youth arrive, ask them to examine the map. Have they ever traveled or wished to travel in the region of the Mediterranean Sea? Where is this part of the world? What happened there? Who might have traveled to the cities noted?

When all are present, ask the youth to turn to I Timothy 4:12-16 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the group in the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, Please watch over and keep safe all my friends. Ease their worries, calm their fears, heal their wounds, and most of all, show them your love. Thank you. Amen. I love you.

Lorna, grade 8

Lector: *A reading from the First letter of Paul to Timothy, chapter 4, verses 12 through 16.*

(Full text on p. 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time est: 15-20 min)

Briefly tell the story of Paul and Timothy; make the point that Paul is older and more experienced than the young Timothy. Ask questions to promote discussion:

- Does it seem strange to you that Paul and Timothy are colleagues?
- Does it surprise you that their work is of equal importance?
- What do the words colleague and mentor mean to you? Can Paul be both a colleague and a mentor to Timothy?
- Is there a required age for being a mentor?
- Is there a reason a person's age would be important to the Church or to God?
- How do people of different ages help and support each other in this church?
- What unique contributions do we make when we are young?

- What unique contributions do adults make?
- Does the Church use a different Baptismal Covenant for each age group? (See *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 299)

As the youth answer the questions, bring out a picture of your church blueprints, or provide the outline of a church building large enough for youth to write on. Put the image on the wall and begin filling in the answers to the questions above. Write them on the roof, the foundation, the flooring, and so forth.

Conclude by reminding them that it takes everyone to build a strong community of faith—a community that can be a presence to all people both young and old.

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

- **Letters:** Epistles are letters. Ask the youth to write a letter to a younger Sunday school class preparing them for the school year ahead. What words of advice or warning would they give that would encourage them to continue to come to Sunday school?
- **Collage:** Provide magazines, poster board, glue and scissors ready. Invite the youth to create a collage of pictures and words depicting all age groups working and playing together.

Games

- **Who Am I?** The week before, ask youth to bring pictures of themselves when they were babies. If possible, add childhood pictures of church leaders. Number the pictures and place them on a table. Give each youth a minute to identify the pictures. Discuss the phrase “children of the faith” after all have had a turn.
- **“Life is like a Box of Chocolates.”** Invite participants to choose a piece of candy from the box. Instruct them not to eat it until all have been served. When everyone has chosen a piece, ask them first to explain why they chose that piece of chocolate and secondly to describe a quality which they admire in both an adult and a friend.

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 segment from *Star Wars* highlighting the relationship of Luke Skywalker and his mentor Obi Wan Kenobi. Pay particular attention to issues of age and authority in Luke assuming his “ordained” role.
- **Print:** Look at the letters to the editor in your local newspaper. What are the topics? Are the opinions words of advice or warning? What if Paul or Timothy were the editors? Encourage youth to write a letter to the editor about something they think is important to the community.

WEAVINGS

- Use this session to plan and promote an intergenerational activity or worship service for the parish.
- The term intergenerational is frequently used in church, partly because it is one place where people of different ages can be together. Too often we keep age groups apart through “children's chapel” and social events targeted to a specific age group. Help your church plan a variety of activities that allow intermingling of all age groups.
- A popular book called *Reviving Ophelia*, by Mary Pipher, looks at the everyday dangers of being young and how adults can help. An important strategy in the book is having young people spend time with older people to lessen the impact of peer appraisal and pressure. As a youth leader, you are already part of the solution!

RESOURCE POSTER

- New Testament Map (No. 2)

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 "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 490).
- Learn a new song from *Gather* (GIA Publications, Inc.) called "Faithful Family," 300.
- Listen to David Bowie's *Changes*.

Service

- **Happy holidays:** Contact a child care center in an urban setting or a center for homeless children about setting up a holiday party. Let the youth plan and prepare the games, refreshments, and decorations.

Sharing

- **Fun and games:** Plan a coffee hour/punch and cookie time after a worship service. Let the youth prepare and serve refreshments to young and old. Encourage some of them to plan activities for the younger members of the parish.

Study

- **Vocations:** Ask youth to share vocations they are exploring. Who has influenced their choices so far? Throughout history people have entered apprenticeships to learn a trade or profession. Today we have internships and "bring

your child to work days" to help young people think about the future. What is the advantage of this method of learning a profession or trade? Find adults in the parish who would be willing to spend some time with a young person who would like to explore a specific career.

- **Across the ages:** Look at opportunities for intergenerational gatherings in the Bible. The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14), Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt.21:1-11), the first Passover (Exodus 12). Imagine that you are part of the crowd. What conversation are you having with the adult standing next to you about all these things that are happening?

Voices

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

Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

Joel 2:28

So I say to you, my friends, that even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self evident that all are created equal.

Dr. Martin Luther King

Ah, but I was so much older then,
I'm younger than that now.

Bob Dylan

I never dared be radical when young
For fear it would make me conservative when old.

Robert Frost

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 249 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Leader: *Let us pray. Almighty God, you gave to your servant Timothy special gifts of grace to understand and teach the truth as it is in Christ Jesus: Grant that by this teaching we may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

*Of a Theologian and Teacher
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 249*

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth identify the value of a community that includes all age groups? Can they imagine for themselves relationships with both older and younger people within the church? Can they suggest places and circumstances where that might happen? Do they know what a mentor is?

Priscilla & Aquila: Doing God's Work

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

The objective of this session is to explore what it means to do “God’s work” by looking at the story of Priscilla and Aquila. Youth will be able to identify God’s work for their lives and to name gifts they have to do that work. They will also recognize the benefits of God’s people working together.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on doing ministry, or God’s work, with others. Key names are Priscilla and Aquila. For spiritual preparation think about God’s work in the world, the gifts you bring to that work, and how you have worked with others.

Commentary

Our covenant promise with God in Jesus Christ calls us into relationship with one another. Part of that covenant is working together to spread the “Good News” of God’s love for us and to serve God in the world. The Book of Acts and Paul’s letters give us a picture of Paul’s ministry as he worked with others to spread the gospel. Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife team, are two people that Paul mentions in his letters.

We know only a few sketchy facts about the couple. Aquila is a Jew from the Asiatic province of Pontus. When we first meet him with his wife Priscilla in Corinth, we find out that they have recently been expelled from Italy along with other Jews by the Emperor Claudius. Besides working with them as evangelists,

Paul labored beside them as a fellow craftsman in the tentmaking trade.

Their work together expanded beyond tentmaking. When Paul moved from Corinth to Ephesus, he took Priscilla and Aquila with him. While in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila were instrumental in teaching another disciple, Apollos, about baptism and the gospel.

Priscilla and Aquila are an example of people working together to serve God and spread the gospel. They follow a pattern set by Jesus who sent his disciples out two by two to do God’s work while he was alive. How Christians minister together depends on their individual gifts and the opportunities for ministry found with others at work, play, and worship.

For further study: James Fenhagen’s book *Mutual Ministry* is a good source for looking at ways lay and ordained ministers can work together in today’s world. Other books, such as *Listening Hearts* (Morehouse Publishers), explore ways to identify your gifts. Reread the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, to find more about God’s work.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—*Tentmakers*, Elizabeth Wolf
 - **Key Verse**—“. . . and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers.”
—Acts 18:3
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Psalm, Gospel of Matthew, James Fenhagen
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius has ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers.

Acts 18:1-4

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Some youth may find it difficult to work in pairs with a person of the opposite sex. Let youth choose who they would like to work with, and then ask them to work with someone they do not know well.
- Refer to Matthew 25 if the youth have difficulty identifying what God's work might be. Use this passage as a springboard for youth to come up with their own list.
- **Discussion Starter:** Name one way you could do God's work with another person.

Personal Views

Before we can do God's work, we must discern what that work should be. Jesus' teachings provide guidelines to help us discover what God is calling us to do. We may be called to help those less fortunate than ourselves, such as the poor, the hungry, or those without shelter. What do you consider God's work to be in your life?

The next step is to identify gifts that can be used to do that work. What gifts do you have? Are you a good listener? Are you a good organizer? Can you write or speak well in front of others?

Read Paul's letter about various kinds of gifts and ministries, such as teaching, healing, prayer, and self-control. He also writes in his first letter to the Corinthians that we are all a part of Christ's body, each part necessary for the whole.

What are your gifts and how can you use them to serve God? Have you ever worked with others to do God's work? What was that like? Ask yourself the same questions you will be asking the youth.

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding; Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 225

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Before the group meets, make copies of "Gift Squares" from Panel 4 of Resource Poster 6. Give each

youth a copy; as they enter the room, ask them to try to get as many signatures as possible of others who have the "gifts" in each square. (You can make your own game sheet by writing different gifts such as good listener, likes to read, etc. on a grid.)

When everyone is present, ask the youth to turn to Acts 18:1-3 in their Bibles. Select a lector and read together the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, we pray for you to teach us to forgive those who have doubted us so that we may continue to work together to do your work here on earth. That we may learn to do like Priscilla and Aquila did and help those who need our help to believe in you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

—Brittany, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from the Book of Acts, Chapter 18, verses 1 through 4.*

(Full text on p. 2)

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

During the week, gather construction paper, pieces of wood, nails, hammers, glue, a cardboard box or two sticks, scraps of cloth, crayons, magic markers, etc.

After the opening, ask the youth what they discovered about each others gifts. Were there any surprises?

Look again at the reading from Acts. From the Commentary, provide additional information about Priscilla and Aquila. Ask the youth to brainstorm a list of what they think God's work entails. Bring out the point that working together may be more effective than working along. Ask the group to also list five things they think are necessary in order to work together.

Divide the group into pairs and tell the first pair to begin designing and making a "Working Together Machine."

After a few minutes, invite the next pair to join the first pair in working on the machine. Keep inviting pairs to join the project until all the youth are working together. Remind them to refer to the list they made about God's work in designing the machine and the list about working together in building the machine. Save time at the end to talk about what they have made and how they worked together.

For further discussion:

- When we think about God's work we often envision the homeless, the hungry, the poor. Are we limited to these? How can young people do God's work?
- How is God a part of the work we do together? How does God help us do that work?

Optional Activities

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

Expressions

- **Poetry:** Write a haiku (a type of Japanese poetry) or other types of poetry about doing ministry together.
- **Mimes:** Ask youth to list different kinds of ministries that can be done with another person. Get a volunteer to do a mime of each situation. No talking!

Games

- **Roll the box:** Make a small, three-dimensional, square box out of cardboard. Draw a different body part on each side of the square: eye, ear, nose, hand, foot, mouth. Ask one person to roll the box, like throwing dice. The roller must name a ministry that can be done with the body part that

comes up on top. For the second round, the youth will roll the box twice to come up with two body parts; now the roller must find a ministry the two parts can do together. A ministry cannot be used more than once. If someone cannot think of a ministry, he or she must ask someone else to help. The game is over when all are stumped or time is up.

- **T-Tower:** Place a t-shirt on the floor. The object is to put as many people on the shirt without touching the floor. The youth can try to form a pyramid or sit on each other's shoulder, etc. If the group is large, you may need to break into smaller teams.

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:** Old *Andy Hardy* films show youth working together to put on a show, and other enterprises. Preview one of these films, available at larger video stores, and use a chosen sequence to talk about how the youth worked together.
- **Print:** Write a story for the church newsletter about people working together in your church.

Music

Music is important for today's youth and can be an integral part of youth experience in the context of Bible and Church activities. The music suggestions offered here reflect a broad variety of possibilities from simple listening to hearty

WEAVINGS

- Use this session in conjunction with other lessons about Paul and those with whom he worked.
- Ministry is a word that is often reserved for the ordained. God, however, clearly calls each of us to do God's work. Be aware of ministry performed by lay people in the church and in the community.
- The need to work together for mutual goals has always been a part of history. Ancient civilizations recognized the need for alliances to insure their safety and well-being. In World War II the Allies joined together to defeat the Germans and their allies. Today our country is part of various defense and trade pacts, recognizing the value of working together. As the world becomes smaller through rapid communication systems and transportation, we will have to work harder at joining together to solve problems that affect us all.

RESOURCE POSTER

- The Tentmakers (No. 4)
- Map of New Testament Lands (No. 2)
- Gift Squares (Panel 4: No. 6)

music making. Seek out musicians within youth, church, and community groups to sing and play along.

- Sing together “Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love” *The Hymnal 1982*, 602.
- Sing “Thuma Mina,” a South African hymn in *Gather*, 484.
- Listen to the song “Lean on Me.” What does this song say about working together?

Service

- **Team projects:** Divide the group into teams of two to four people. Provide a list of service projects in the community or use the list created in the mime *Expressions* activity. Ask the teams to find a way each person on the team can be a part of a project the team decides to do.

Sharing

- **Work share:** Invite a Sunday school class of young children to join the youth in a Saturday project at the church such as washing windows or raking leaves. Make sure the children are given appropriate and useful tasks that they can do.

Study

- **Reading:** Read what Paul has to say about gifts and Christ's body in the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12.
- **Finding places:** Using a concordance, an atlas, and the Resource Poster map (No. 2), ask youth to find the various places Paul went with Priscilla and Aquila.
- **Youth commentary:** In the youth commentary (Session Leaflet, p. 2), Brittany wrote about letters Paul had written that Priscilla and Aquila might have read. What other letters besides the ones to the Corinthians did Paul write? List them. Pretend you are Priscilla or Aquila and write Paul a letter while he was under arrest in Rome.

Voices

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

How very good and how pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity.

—Psalm 133:1

Where two or three are gathered in my name, “I am there among them.”

—Matthew 18:20

Life is enhanced when there is a clear and organized response to the redemptive activity of God in the world at large.

Life is enhanced when caring for persons is viewed and acted upon as the work of the congregation.

—James Fenhagen

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 229 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Leader: *Let us pray.*

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

Proper 3

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 229

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Are youth able to identify some of their own gifts? Are they able to identify what “God's work” means to the Church and to themselves? Are the youth able to talk about the benefits and difficulties of working together?

Many Parts: One Body

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

The focus of this session is the need for Christian communities to work together, respecting differences and honoring uniqueness. “For in the one spirit we were all baptized into one body.” Youth will be able to understand the need for interdependence in Christian community and the roles they play as part of that community.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on interdependence as it is presented in Paul's letter to Corinth. For spiritual preparation read the Personal Views and think about what it means to be “One Body with Christ.”

Commentary

The twelfth chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians is one of the most quoted passages from Paul. The passage stresses interdependence, unity, and cooperation within the Church, the Body of Christ.

Characteristics of a healthy body indicate that each part functions as a part of the whole. Unity does not mean uniformity nor conformity; it means cooperation. Although each person is different, it is the same God who has called everyone together for the common task of “continuing in the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.” (BCP, p. 304)

The conventional argument in Paul's day, and still in use today, was that the community gained its identity from its members. While every member had a place, each place was not of equal value.

People with less prestigious positions are expected to do their jobs and not question those who are their “superiors.” Even the labels given to different jobs reinforce a hierarchical system.

The body of Christ that Paul describes recognizes the equality of each person in the community. Paul maintains that Christ has always been the head of the body, and that all its many members are crucial, but secondary. In Christ, however, all the parts find their unity. He also taught that if “one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

Paul contends that all Christians have unique gifts by virtue of the Spirit given to them in Baptism. “There are a variety of gifts but the same spirit.” God expects people not only to use their gifts to God's service, but also to appreciate and honor the gifts of others.

Personal Views

We need each other to function as the body of Christ in the world. We are also only as strong as the weakest link. Working together creates a whole greater than the sum of its parts, allowing two or three to do it better than one.

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Original art, El Salvador
 - **Key Verse**—*But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.* I Corinthians 12:24b-25
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—Jesus, Dorothy Day, Adrienne Carr, Jean Vanier
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

I Corinthians 12:12-27

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Although cliques are natural at this age, they are not desirable. Allow every youth to be part of the group without the awkwardness of having to be chosen.
- The Episcopal Church is known for its inclusivity, a direct result of the "via media" or creating a middle way. Can you identify examples within your faith community?
- **Discussion Starter:** How can my uniqueness be a gift to those around me?

Secondly, we need to respect each other. We are not able to be the body of Christ alone. Each person's unique gift should be valued and used for the building up of the body of Christ. It is important to acknowledge our uniqueness in God's eyes. Our differences are meant to be used and cherished not only by others but by ourselves.

Thirdly, we need to have compassion for each other. When one part suffers, all are affected. When members of the congregation are at odds with one another, the work of God is prevented from being completed. Respect inevitably leads to compassion and greater cooperation.

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne. *Amen.*

For the Human Family

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

Coming Together

(Time est: 10-15 min)

Ahead of time choose several magazine pictures of four or five people, approximately the same size. Cut the pieces apart so that the heads, hands, arms, legs, feet, and torsos are interchangeable. As the youth arrive invite them to recreate the people.

When everyone is present, ask them to find I Corinthians 12:12-27 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*

Dear God, Help me to treat others like I want to be treated. Give me the strength to resist temptations in my life. Help me to shrug off remarks that seem so big to me, but small to others. Guide me to love and serve you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ashley, grade 7

Lector: *A reading from the First letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 12 through 27.*

(Full text on p.2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time est: 15-20 min)

Use masking tape to outline a giant human body on the floor. Make it large enough so young people can stand inside it. Write one body part on separate 3" x 5" cards: head, eye, ear, nose, mouth, arm, hand, leg, foot and heart. Each youth should have a different card. On the back of the cards write a few verses from the passage in I Corinthians 12:12-27. (A large group may use the whole chapter.)

Distribute the cards and ask the class to stand within the body outline according to the body part written on their card. Let the students read the passage according to the assigned verses on the back.

- What is unique to each body part?
- How can each part be used partially in the Church?
- What does Paul mean when he says "We are called in the Spirit to be one body?"
- How can different and unique people function within one church body?
- Has anyone ever broken an arm or leg? How does the body compensate?
- What is one thing that is unique about you?
- Why is being different a good thing?

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

- **Puzzling pieces:** Give members of the class different puzzle pieces. Ask them to work at putting it together. Discuss how the puzzle looks if one piece is missing.
- **“Houston, We are in Trouble.”** Give youth a bag of objects out of which they must construct a filter to save the astronauts on board Apollo 13. Set a time limit. To make the task more difficult, instruct the youth that they may not talk while they create the filter.
- **Dear Paul:** Ask the youth to write a letter to Paul telling him how the different parts of the body are functioning in the church today.
- **Crisis!** Hand each youth an index card with a name and an occupation on it. Include jobs from a variety of professions and people of all ages. Announce that a deadly virus has just been released into the water supply. There is a safe place to go but there is only room for six people. The community must choose who they will be. Ask each student to be an advocate for the person on their card. Pay careful attention to who they choose and why.

Games

- **I am a machine:** Divide into teams of four to six people. Ask each team to design a human machine, using a person as the moving parts of the machine. Examples: airplane, pencil sharpener, washing machine, beach umbrella.

Media

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

- **Video:** In the movie *Apollo 13* a group of engineers have only a short amount of time to solve a major problem. They must design a new filter using only materials on the troubled spacecraft. If they fail to cut the carbon monoxide emissions the astronauts will suffocate. Ask: What helped the engineers become cohesive? What kept them from being cohesive? How have groups supported you during times of personal or community crisis?
- **Print:** Pass out different sections and features of a daily newspaper, such as weather, comics, world news, local news, etc. Ask the youth to decide which parts of the paper are the most important and which could be left out.

Music

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

- Sing or read the hymn, “We are One in the Spirit.”
- Sing or read the hymn, “O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High” (*The Hymnal 1982, 448*).

WEAVINGS

- Schedule this session before the youth choir or group begins a play, a musical, or other youth event.
- In both the Old and New Testaments God calls people to work together. Our culture celebrates the individual. Paul's message is sometimes difficult for us to live into. While we may see the importance of working together, it is much easier, sometimes, to go our own ways.
- Even though we say every job in the church is important, the vestry member is more likely to be recognized that the person who makes sure the altar linens are clean each week. Be aware of the work done behind the scenes in your church. Take time to thank involved in these tasks.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Christ Preaching (No. 5)

- Listen to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. How do the different instruments blend?

Service

- **Clean up:** Arrange for the youth to clean up a park or natural area near-by. Assign each one a different task, such as carrying the trash bag, raking, shoveling. Each task should require them to rely on each other to get the job done.

Sharing

- **Prayer for unity:** Ask the class to write a prayer about the unity of the Church and present it for use in a worship service.
- **Many parts:** Meet with a person from the worship committee to find out how many people are involved in preparing for worship, including alter guild, acolyte trainers, purchasing wine and wafer, arranging flowers, etc. Find out how youth can become involved in some of these activities.

Study

- **Corinthians:** From the Bible and other sources, find out why Paul was writing the Corinthians about respecting each other's gifts.
- **Missing parts:** When a part is missing, the body usually compensates in some way. A blind person often has heightened hearing skills, for example. Talk to a doctor about other ways the body compensates for the loss of a part. What does the church do when there is a missing part?

Voices

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

A Kingdom divided against itself will fall.
Jesus

The only answer in this life, to the loneliness we are all bound to feel, is community.
Dorothy Day

When you put a diverse group together, the only thing they have in common is God.
Adrienne Carr

If we are accepted with our limitations as well as our abilities, community gradually becomes a place of liberation. Discovering that we are accepted and loved by others, we are better able to accept and love ourselves.
Jean Vanier

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together Proper 10 on page 231 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Leader: *Let us pray.*
O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Proper 10
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 231

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

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Can the youth see how differences are necessary for things to function smoothly? Can they recognize that being a part of a group does not necessarily mean being made in the image and likeness of the most popular group member? Can each youth find a way that he or she is an important part of the church?

Circles in Christ: Being Disciples

New Covenant Disciples

Objective

The focus of this session is the impact of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ on the ministry of the Church, past and present. Through the New Covenant, Christ is present in each person's life. Youth will be able to articulate the importance of being a disciple of Jesus and explore ways in which their actions affect others.

Background for Leaders

The Commentary for this session focuses on the New Covenant. Key ideas are covenant, disciples, faithfulness, and grace. For spiritual preparation consider your own response to God's grace. The Personal Views section may help to stimulate your thinking.

Commentary

Passover has significance for both Christians and those of the Jewish faith. The Passover is the summary of the old covenant, the cornerstone of the Jewish faith. It centers around a meal, called a seder, in which the food and narration interpret Israel's history of deliverance. The event also recalls the covenants of the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. (*Exodus 12:12-14*)

Christians celebrate another meal to mark a new covenant with God's people. When Jesus and the twelve came to the table shortly before the crucifixion, Jesus took the bread, broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup of wine, and gave thanks, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the

new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (vs. 26-28) The New Covenant with Christ marks a new age in God's interaction with the world.

The promised kingdom offered by God through the Incarnation of Jesus as Messiah is fulfilled in the new covenant. The apostles are then called to go forth into the world spreading the good news of salvation.

Generation after generation experiences the ripple effect of one person, Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ the Kingdom becomes our inheritance as well. As the Gospel according to John tells us "[These scriptures] are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." *John 20:31*.

In the New Covenant, God has written the law on our hearts through the Holy Spirit and thus the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit abides in all who believe.

Personal Views

The Eucharist manifests the covenant between God and us and each other. When we participate in this sacrament, we are in Christ and Christ in us. We become his hands and feet in the world. As members of the church, we bear the responsibility of carrying that message beyond our church walls. The dismissal after the Eucharist enjoins us to "Go forth in the name of Christ."

SESSION LEAFLET

- **Art**—Original art, El Salvador
 - **Key Verse**—*[T]hese are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*
John 20:31
 - **Youth Commentary and Prayer**
 - **Voices**—*Newsweek*, Saint Patrick, Frederick Buechner
 - **Daily Reflections**
 - **Words to Remember**
 - **Prayer**—A Prayer attributed to S. Francis (BCP, p. 833)
-

LECTOR'S TEXT

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:30-31

TIPS ON THE TOPIC

- Youth in this age group have a hard time understanding cause and effect that is not immediate. Instead, they often concentrate on the moment. Help youth to think through the consequences of actions they take now and those they will take in the future.
- Younger youth need ritual at this time in their lives, just as they need boundaries. Ritual is also an important part of the Church. One of the ways we renew our relationship with God is through the sacrament of the Eucharist. Just as boundaries keep youth safe, the Eucharist calls us back to the safety of God.
- **Discussion Starter:** Does God's New Covenant really affect the way we live our lives?

Going forth in the name of Christ creates a ripple effect especially if our actions convey our Christianity. Like a stone thrown into a pond, a kind word or deed echoes in the lives of those around us. Often this echo reaches far beyond what we can see or imagine. Conversely, our actions can have negative consequences too.

It is through God's abundant grace that we can be in relationship to God. Through the Resurrection on Easter, we have been redeemed for God and forgiven of our sins, if only we will recognize God's presence in our lives and seek God's will in all we do.

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Second Sunday of Easter
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 223

Coming Together

(Time: 10-15 min)

Bring in a copy of the comics from the Sunday paper. As the youth arrive, invite them to find evidence of God's work in the world in the cartoons.

When everyone is present, ask the youth to find John 20:30-31 in their Bibles. Select a lector to lead the group in the following prayer (Session Leaflet, p. 2):

Lector: *Let us pray.*
Dear Lord, Help me to eat the food of the earth so that I might

have the energy to help others, the Strength to be as forgiving as you, the Wisdom to be as understanding as you, the Heart to be as loving as you. Help me to drink the water of the earth so that I might have the courage to be as brave as you, the Spirit to be as happy as you, the Hope to be as giving as you, the Knowledge to be as thoughtful as you. Help me to remember you not only at the time of the celebration of the Last Supper, but as I look around me at everything I know and see. Help me to know that you are the true giver of life to me. Amen.

Helen, Grade 8

Lector: *A reading from the Gospel of John, Chapter 20, verse 31.*

(Full text is on p. 2.)

Lector: *The Word of the Lord.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Engaging (Time: 15-20 min)

Add the main section of the newspaper from the same day as the comic strips the youth examined earlier. Divide the class into two groups. Give one group the funny pages and one group the main section. Ask the class to read their section of the paper and choose a comic strip or a news story that interests them. After they have made their selections, ask each group to answer the following questions:

- Whose actions support or nourish people in the story/strip?
- In what ways does that happen in the strip/story?
- Whose actions undermine and betray others?

Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. After the discussion, gather everyone in a circle. Ask one person from each group to report back to the class about the story they chose and what it says about helping others.

For further discussion:

- How does living as a disciple of Christ nourish and support us?
- How does that kind of life affect life together in 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

- **Ripples:** Fill a bowl with water. Toss an object such as a pebble in the water. Discuss what happens and how that is like discipleship in the church.
- **Poetry:** Write a poem about how Christians can affect the lives around them. Use symbols of ever widening circles to describe the way we influence others.
- **Rings of love:** Using concentric circles of construction paper or other medium, invite the youth to diagram and trace their actions from the first moment they felt Jesus was a part of their lives.
- **Last words:** Visit a local cemetery, or bring in some examples of what is often written on headstones. What epitaphs or last words about loved ones are evident? Ask the class to create their own epitaph: what would they want to say to those left behind?

Games

- **Cinnamon Roll:** Everyone stands and holds hands facing the center of the circle. Ask one person to drop the person's hand on the right and to begin to spin in a counterclockwise direction into the circle. This action should cause the rest of the group to wrap

around the spinner, like a cinnamon roll.

- **Aah Ooh:** Everyone stands in a circle, holding hands. The leader begins by squeezing the hand of the person on the right and saying "ooh." That person squeezes the hand to the right and repeats the phrase. Continue around the circle. When the leader chooses, s/he squeezes the hand of the person on the left, saying, "aah." That person squeezes the next hand on the left, saying, "aah," and continues around the circle. The meeting of the two (ooh and aah) in the middle is always a humorous moment.

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:** View a clip from the last segment of the movie *Leap of Faith*. Steve Martin plays the role of a traveling evangelist running a shady revival known as "Miracles and Wonders." After a young boy is truly healed, the entire community gathers forming a series of circles for eating and praying and Bible study around the campground as far as the eye can see.
- **Print:** Examine popular magazines and look for ways people help each other. Discuss the stories as Christian acts.

Music

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

WEAVINGS

- This session can be used in conjunction with Maundy Thursday.
- Sometimes when we think of circles of friends, we are referring to an exclusive group. In this session the circles of disciples refer to inclusive groups that grow ever larger as Christians tell others the good news of Jesus Christ.
- This week be aware of the impact your moods or acts have on those around you. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to be angry around someone who is also angry? On the other hand, it's hard to stay angry around someone who is loving. Greeting your family with calmness and kindness in the morning may be the best gift you can give them.

RESOURCE POSTER

- Christ Preaching (No. 5)

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 the hymn, "God is Love, and where true love is." (*The Hymnal 1982*, 576)
- Listen to Amy Grant's recording of "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded" or "1974."
- Listen to the words of the country song, "Will the Circle be Unbroken."

Service

- **Random acts:** Plan a "random acts of kindness day." Take youth to a populated area and distribute flowers, balloons, or notes of good wishes. Upon their return, talk about what it was like to give something away. How did the recipients respond?

Sharing

- **Shadow ministry:** As a class choose one or more committees in the church to shadow and learn what they do, how they do it, and who it affects.

Study

- **Look it up:** Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary compare these words: cause, effect, affect, effort, consequence, thanksgiving, covenant and promise. Ask the class to find metaphors for 'new covenant.'
- **Passover:** Learn more about Passover at the library or by talking to a rabbi in your community.

Voices

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

Before going to Bosnia I thought the kids would be different from American kids. But the scary thing is, they weren't. It shows that war can happen anywhere and touch anybody. Everyone always says the point of remembering the Holocaust is to make sure it won't happen again, but after talking to the kids in the former Yugoslavia, I learned how easily it can happen again."

15 year-old Manhattan female,
Newsweek, January 8, 1996

God's might to direct me, God's power to protect me, God's wisdom for learning, God's eye for discerning, God's ear for my hearing, God's word for my clearing.

Saint Patrick

To eat this particular meal together is to meet at the level of our most basic humaneness, which involves our need not just for food but for each other. I need you to help fill my emptiness just as you need me to help fill yours....The next time you walk down the street, take a good look at every face you pass and in your mind say Christ died for thee. That girl. That slob. That phony. That crook. That saint. That damned fool. Christ died for thee. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee.

Frederick Buechner

Going Forth

Gather the group for a closing prayer and dismissal. Read together the prayer on page 221 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Leader: *Let us pray.*

Almighty father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for Maundy Thursday
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 221

Leader: *Let us go forth in the name of Christ.*

People: *Thanks be to God.*

Look For

Do youth understand that through the New Covenant Christ is present in their lives? Can the youth articulate the importance of Christ in their lives? Can they make a connection between their actions and belief in a God who abides with us? Can they see that they influence those around them?