

## Youth Ministry in Your Congregation

**Goal** — This workshop is designed to help participants consider styles of youth ministry which might be used in their local church. The workshop is designed to be used with adult groups or with groups of adults and youth together.

**Objectives** — Activities in this workshop are designed to enable participants to:

1. List several ways in which it is different and the same to be a 15-year-old today as opposed to when they were that age.
2. List some of the necessary elements which will empower youth ministry.
3. Discuss why a “youth group” ministry is only one of many types of ministry in which we might engage with youth.
4. Tell others in their local church setting about alternative styles of youth ministry.

### **As People Arrive** (15 minutes)

Get acquainted informally.

### **Brainstorming** (15 minutes)

Welcome. We have an impossible task: "Youth ministry" is not something we can "cover" in an hour. During this workshop we will share some ideas we hope will be helpful. It is important to remember that it is not fair to discuss "youth" in general, any more than we can discuss “adults” in general as if it’s universal. All we can do without specific examples is to speak in generalities.

If the group is larger than 10 people, break into smaller groups of 5 to 10. Ask adults in the group to remember what it was like for them as a teenager. Remember the year when you were 15. How is it different today for 15-year-olds? How the same? Post three sheets of newsprint around the room labeled Differences, Similarities, and Needs. Invite people to write comments on each list. On the Needs page invite participants to list youth ministry needs they perceive for their congregation. Some ideas of similarities and differences which have been shared in previous workshops include:

#### Differences

- +More emphasis on sports.
- +More emphasis on getting a job.
- +Money and things in control.
- +Dating patterns different.
- +Drugs a real concern.

#### Similarities

- +Self esteem important.
- +Academics still important.
- +Sexual changes similar.

Ask the group to discuss how the Christian message speaks to these lists. What is unique about the Christian story? How does it conflict with values taught by the school story? By the work story? By the sports story? By the peer story?

**Youth Ministry Possibilities** (15 minutes)

Distribute Handout A. On newsprint list the activities in these three categories which are currently a part of the local church(es) represented in the group. Add any activities which are not on the handout placing them in the proper category. You may discover that there is much more youth ministry happening in the church than you imagined! Share with the group that this list is from *Planning for Youth Ministry*, a process which is available to help a local church decide which of these styles of youth ministry are most likely to work in their local church setting.

Encourage people to discuss their preconceptions about what makes a great youth ministry. Is there an expectation that there will be a youth friendship group at the church? Can a successful youth ministry involve one youth? Often our preconceptions about youth ministry are roadblocks to developing effective youth ministry: We expect to have a friendship group where this is not the greatest need, we expect to have a group of 25 when smaller numbers are the reality, or we remember successful youth ministries from the past which we cannot do in the same way today.

**Some Youth Ministry Opportunities for Today** (30 minutes)

Depending on the size of your group and the setting of the workshop, explore some or all of the youth ministry possibilities on Handout B. If you have a longer time you might invite persons who have been involved in ministries like these to set up interest centers allowing people 10-15 minutes to explore each youth ministry idea.

**Discussion and Brainstorming** (15 minutes)

What other ideas and needs do people want to share?

Ask people to spend time discussing next steps for sharing these ideas with others in their local church setting.

Close with prayer.

Handout A

## Youth Ministry Activities

Youth ministry activities may be considered in three categories. Often when we speak of youth ministry in the church we think primarily of one type of a meeting activity: a youth friendship group. There are many ways to organize youth ministry in the church.

### Meeting Activities

(Activities in which a group of youth have several meetings in the course of a year.)

Church School	Fellowship Group
Bible Study Group	Youth Choir
Sport Team	Prayer Breakfast
Sharing Group	Recreation Nights
Drama Group	Study Groups
Outreach Group	Newspaper

### Event Activities

(Activities planned so that individuals may participate one time.)

Retreats	Prayer Vigils
Vacation Church School	Trips
Service Projects	Cluster/State/Region Events
Social Events	Association/Conference Events
Seminars	Festivals
Hikes	Fund Raisers
Athletic Events	Camping
Seasonal Celebrations	Exchanges with Other Churches
Recognition Programs	Performances

### Individual Activities

(Activities planned for one youth — Can also be for small groups of youth.)

Going Out for a Snack	Visiting Shut-Ins
Relationships with Church Officers	Dropping by Homes
Counseling	Involvement on Church Board
Attending School Events	Running a Coffee House
Worship Involvement	Teaming with Adults who have
Attending Special Events	Similar Skill or Career
Teaching Special Skills	Interests
Birthday Activities	Mentoring

Adapted from *Organizing a Youth Ministry to Fit your Needs* by Jeffrey D. Jones and Kenneth C. Potts, © 1983 Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA. Used with the permission of Judson Press. *Organizing a Youth Ministry to Fit Your Needs* may be ordered through Judson Press at 1-800-458-3766.

## Handout B

## Youth Ministry Opportunities

### Eight Ideas

<p><b>1. Youth Group</b> — <i>Meeting Activity</i> This is the “traditional” youth ministry many people desire in the church. Usually such youth ministry is powered by a friendship group of youth who belong to the church. It needs trained adult and youth leaders to work well. Consider inviting a nearby church which has such a ministry to share with you the way they have organized their ministry.</p>	<p><b>2. Mentoring</b> — <i>Individual Activity</i> Mentoring is a way for youth and adults to connect to learn from one other in a one-to-one relationship. There is a “Guide for Mentoring” in <i>Affirming Faith: A Congregation’s Guide to Confirmation</i>. Mentoring may be used in youth ministry in other than faith formation programs.</p>
<p><b>3. Acolyte Program</b> — <i>Meeting Activity</i> Consider inviting those who want to be acolytes to four meetings per year to learn about worship and being an acolyte, and to have fun and community together. Often being an acolyte is an individual activity, but adding the group dimension can greatly enhance the experience for youth.</p>	<p><b>4. Human Sexuality Education</b> — <i>Meeting Activity</i> The new human sexuality program for youth, <i>Our Whole Lives</i> will be available in 1999. Gather information about it. Invite those from your conference who have been trained to introduce the adult program, <i>Created in God’s Image</i>, to share information about that program.</p>
<p><b>5. Confirmation/Faith Formation</b> – <i>Meeting Activity</i> Share faith development ideas from <i>Affirming Faith: A Congregation’s Guide to Confirmation</i>. Focus on searching faith. Suggest that holding the congregation’s faith formation program in several weekend events may prove helpful. It may be possible to hold some overnight events during the year school holidays.</p>	<p><b>6. Outdoor Ministry</b> – <i>Event Activity</i> Share information about your conference’s outdoor ministry program. Before the summer recruit a group of 4-5 youth plus an adult leader to attend one of the camps together. Have individuals or a group participate in other conference or association youth activities. Invite a conference staff person to describe the conference’s outdoor ministry program..</p>
<p><b>7. Work Camps</b> – <i>Event Activity</i> Share the model of attending a work camp, either nearby or far away. Many youth groups have traveled to work, for example, on a Habitat for Humanity house. There are many such volunteer opportunities in the church with which your conference might help. Your resource center may have the video “With Hammers, Paint, and Love” which describes how an Ohio group became involved in work camping</p>	<p><b>8. Association, Conference, Regional, National Youth Ministry Opportunities</b> – <i>Event Activities</i> Invite someone who has attended a national or regional youth event to tell about the experience. Consider organizing individuals or a group to attend a conference or association youth event.</p>

## Planning for Youth Ministry

**Goal:** This planning process is designed to help both the youth and those responsible for youth ministry in a local church decide which type of youth ministry is most likely to be successful and to develop a purpose statement for the ministry.

**Process:** Form a small group of interested people who would like to develop or strengthen youth ministry in your congregation. Include youth as well as adults! This group may need to meet several times to organize the ministry they envision.

Begin with the “Youth Ministry Questionnaire” (pages 5.3.6 to 5.3.8). You may wish to ask others in the congregation to fill out the questionnaire. Individuals should complete the tally sheet on page 5.3.8, which is designed to help the group decide which type of youth ministry – group centered, meeting centered, or individual centered – best fits the circumstances of the youth and the congregation. Examples of youth ministry activities which fit these types can be found on Handout A and B, pages 5.3.3 and 5.3.4.

Discuss with each other in the planning group findings about your congregation and types of youth ministry. If there were differing perceptions among people as a result of the questionnaire, it may be helpful to go over answers to individual questions and then, as a group, to fill out another questionnaire, attempting to agree on your answers. If there are still differing perceptions, this may indicate that more than one type of youth ministry might fit your congregation’s life.

Next, turn to the process for developing a statement of purpose on pages 5.3.9 to 5.3.11. Work through this process allowing time to share the results of your work with other youth and adults in the congregation, so that you can have their input and feedback and so they feel ownership. Be sure to include all four of the elements toward the bottom of page 5.3.9 in your statement. That way you will have not only a statement of the foundation of your youth ministry, but also you will identify the next steps you need to take to make the ministry become a reality in the life of your congregation.

The materials which follow are adapted from *Organizing a Youth Ministry to Fit your Needs* by Jeffrey D. Jones and Kenneth C. Potts, © 1983 Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA. Used with the permission of Judson Press. *Organizing a Youth Ministry to Fit Your Needs* may be ordered through Judson Press at 1-800-458-3766.

## **Youth Ministry Questionnaire**

### **Deciding on the Approach for Your Congregation**

Part I: Check the answers that best describe your congregation.

Which youth does the congregation want to involve in its youth program?

- 1. \_\_\_ Youth whose families belong to the congregation.
- 9. \_\_\_ Youth both within and outside the congregation.

How would you describe the youth that the congregation wants to involve?

- 2. \_\_\_ Relatively free of non-church involvements.
- 10. \_\_\_ Heavily involved in non-church activities.

How well do the youth know one another?

- 3. \_\_\_ Quite well.
- 11. \_\_\_ Not very well.

How comfortable are the youth with one another?

- 4. \_\_\_ Quite comfortable.
- 12. \_\_\_ Not very comfortable.

What school(s) do youth attend?

- 5. \_\_\_ Most attend the same school.
- 13. \_\_\_ Most attend different schools.

How far do most youth live from the church?

- 6. \_\_\_ Within easy walking or driving distance.
- 14. \_\_\_ Beyond easy walking or driving distance.

What are the feelings of the youth about getting together?

- 7. \_\_\_ They like to get together regularly.
- 15. \_\_\_ Although they like getting together, they can't or won't do it often.
- 17. \_\_\_ They do not enjoy being together.

What is the adult feeling about involvement in the youth program?

- 8. \_\_\_ There are adults who are willing and able to meet with youth regularly.
- 16. \_\_\_ There are adults who are willing to work with a group but they are unable to spend the time to meet regularly.
- 18. \_\_\_ A number of adults are willing and able to relate with youth but do not want to conduct a youth program.

(After completing Part II, tally your answers on page 5.3.8.)

Part II: Check all those statements that you believe describe your congregation.

- 1. Youth are committed to learning about and experiencing their faith on a regular basis.
- 2. The youth spend time together throughout the week.
- 3. There is space in the church building which can be set aside permanently for a youth meeting, lounge, or recreation area.
- 4. The church is a gathering place for youth.
- 5. The youth want to try a variety of different things as part of the youth program.
- 6. There is money available from the youth themselves and within the congregation for special events.
- 7. There are a number of facilities and resources for different kinds of youth activities in the area.
- 8. Youth and adults are willing to spend time in advance planning and publicity.
- 9. We want to place an emphasis on responding to the unique needs of individual youth rather than responding to needs youth have in common.
- 10. One of our primary concerns is to make youth an integral part of all church activities (committees, boards, worship, church school).
- 11. The congregation has few resources it can devote to a youth program.
- 12. There are not enough youth in the congregation for a significant group.

(Use the Tally Sheet on page 5.3.8 to tally your answers to both Parts I and II.)

## Tally Sheet – Interpreting the Responses

In Part I, how many checks did you have in each of the following groupings? Record your answers on the lines provided

	A	B	C
Answers 1 - 8	_____		
Answers 9 - 16		_____	
Answers 9 - 14, 17, 18			_____

In Part II, how many checks did you have in each of the following groupings? Record your answers on the lines provided.

Statements 1 - 4	_____		
Statements 5 - 8		_____	
Statements 9 - 12			_____

What is the total of each column?                      A\_\_\_\_ B\_\_\_\_ C\_\_\_\_

The column that has the greatest number of checks indicates the approach that is likely to be most appropriate for your congregation.

Column with Most Checks	Most Appropriate Approach
_____	_____
A	Meeting Centered Approach
B	Event Centered Approach
C	Individual Centered Approach

## **Developing a Statement of Purpose**

The following process may be helpful to you in developing a statement of purpose for your congregation's youth ministry.

This process will work best if a group composed of youth and adults works together to develop the statement. Once the statement is written, it can be shared with other youth and adults in the congregation for their reactions. These reactions should then be considered by the group, and any changes that are appropriate should be incorporated into the statement.

1. Review the lists on pages 5.3.10 and 5.3.11, checking any items that you believe are important to your congregation.
2. What faith perspectives are important to your congregation? What biblical references come to mind as the group works?
3. Add any items that you believe are important and are not included on the lists.
4. Select no more than five of the checked items (the ones that you believe are most important and most basic) to be included in the purpose statement.
5. Use these items as the basis for a statement beginning: "The purpose of our youth ministry is to enable youth to . . ."

Your statement of purpose should include:

- ! The faith grounding for your ministry both from the Bible and from the church's experience of faith.
- ! Your vision and history incorporating the ideas discovered in the process below.
- ! The current goals of the youth ministry.
- ! The current tasks which must be accomplished to help the ministry become a reality.

This purpose statement should serve as a vehicle for easily interpreting the ministry in the congregation and community

A youth ministry purpose statement should deal with two concerns:

**“What will happen to the youth?”**

**“What will the youth do?”**

Be sure to include both concerns in your statement of purpose.

**“What will happen to the youth?”**

(Choose all that apply and add others that fit your congregation and youth.)

In our youth ministry youth will:

Grow in faith.

Develop a positive self-concept.

See their faith as central to their identity.

Increase their knowledge of the Bible.

See the relationship of faith to important issues in their lives.

Grow in their ability to develop honest, open, caring relationships.

Be part of a caring Christian community.

Grow in understanding their role in the church's ministry.

Develop a better understanding of themselves as females or males.

Grow in their relationships with parents and other significant adults.

Develop meaningful values that can be used to make lifestyle decisions.

Be prepared for the future.

Develop better relationships with their brothers and sisters.

---

---

---

---

**"What will the youth do?"**

(Choose all that apply and add others that fit your congregation and youth.)

In our youth ministry youth will:

\_\_\_ Participate in the life of the church.

\_\_\_ Share in worship leadership.

\_\_\_ Become involved in mission.

\_\_\_ Live as Christians in daily life at school or work.

\_\_\_ Respond, as individuals and/or a group, to significant social issues.

\_\_\_ Become involved in evangelism.

\_\_\_ Live as Christians in their families.

---

---

---

---