

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

This age span can be confusing for both youth and the adults in their lives. There surely will be a range of developmental levels within the group, so be prepared for some mixed responses to the activities. At times youth may feel like they have the world on a string and the next moment feel like the end of the world is near. Since this developmental age is particularly sensitive to how their peers perceive them, it's important to establish a strong sense of community and respect for all individuals.

About this Exploration

Throughout our whole lives we have the opportunity to discover our gifts of ministry. As we listen attentively to God's call and affirmation—identifying our own passions, gifts, and skills and participating in community where gifts are celebrated and shared—our gifts shape the unique ministry we have as we serve God and God's people. The process of discovery may involve prayer, community, scripture, nature, solitude, silence, and openness to the gentle nudging of the Spirit. We may be surprised by the Spirit, as well, and discover new and unexpected gifts along our journey.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Ezekiel 2:1–5
1 Corinthians 1:1–9

Leader Preparation

Before you begin preparing this session, take a moment to reflect on each of the youth. Remember where their faith journeys have taken them thus far. No doubt some will have traveled a straight path since birth; others will have encountered multiple obstacles that may have caused some delays or even detours in their itineraries. Think of yourself as a compass guiding, loving, encouraging, and walking along beside them as they discover the gifts of ministry. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.”

The Exploring & Engaging activities invite youth to use not only their minds but also their physical skills and energy to expand the space for God in their lives. The Discerning & Deciding activities engage them in open-ended challenges so they may appreciate the multiple solutions available to them and realize that conclusions reached now may be changed in the future based on personal experiences. The Sending & Serving activities identify potential gifts of youth and other gifts they may be developing to serve God.

Prayer: God, please help me to highlight the unique gifts, abilities, and talents with which you have blessed youth. Give me the courage and confidence to explore their talents and help to develop those talents.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 All in the Family (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Post one blank sheet of newsprint at the front of the group and three sheets around the room with one of the following headings on each sheet:

- Gifts of Grandparents
- Gifts of Parents
- Gifts of Siblings

Give yourself enough time to prepare the room environment and the materials so you’ll be available to greet each youth by name and chat individually as each joins the group.

Supplies:

- (optional) gift bag or box
- marker for each station
- blank sheet of newsprint
- prepared sheets of newsprint

Greet everyone by name, and chat with youth as they join the group. Invite each to find a partner and talk about the things each person’s family members are really good at doing or enjoy doing. After a few minutes of conversation, hold up a gift box or bag and ask the group what was the most surprising gift they ever gave and what was the most surprising gift they ever received.

Invite the group to explore gifts of family members—things they are really good at doing or enjoy doing. Suggest that maybe someone in the family is really good at making desserts, being a listener to their experiences, or tending a vegetable garden. Invite the participants to offer some examples, too. Accept all ideas offered without comment as you jot them on a blank sheet of newsprint.

Divide the youth into three groups using birth dates, height, or some other criteria. Station a group at each labeled newsprint sheet around the room. Explain that each group will have three minutes to add gift ideas to each page. Then move clockwise to the next sheet, and add ideas to the next paper. After the groups have written on all the sheets, invite the youth to do a silent gallery walk to view all the papers. At the conclusion, ask them what observations they made about the lists. Ask: *Which of the gifts do you think people might be surprised to learn about, and why?* God has also given each of them gifts of ministry to use in service to others. Encourage them to spend time this week thinking about what they enjoy doing or what they are good at doing that could help others.

2 Everyone Has Gifts

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate that everyone does indeed have gifts. Have a gift-wrapped package available. Place a long strip of masking tape on the floor at the front of the meeting space. Preview the video “Nick Vujicic.”

Supplies:

- gift-wrapped package
- masking tape
- computer with Internet access

Thank you for your guidance in using my special gifts in service to you and these young people. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

- digital projector
- video: “Nick Vujicic,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8ZuKF3dxCY>

Place a gift-wrapped package in front of the meeting space. As you greet the youth, tell them that they’ll be exploring their own gifts, talents, and skills. Ask them to consider whether everyone has gifts or talents. Point to the masking tape on the floor, and indicate that one end stands for “Yes,” the other end for “No,” with varying opinions in-between. Invite the youth to stand on the line in response to the question whether everyone has gifts. Let each youth explain his or her place on the line.

Tell the group in advance that they will be meeting a young man with definite physical disabilities but also with many gifts. Show the video “Nick Vujicic.” Invite the youth to share their reactions to Nick and his message. Point out that Nick may have been a person who thought he had no gifts or abilities, but he discovered what he could do, not what he could not do. His story inspires people to find their unique gifts in this world and to share them. Invite the group to consider again the question as to whether everyone has gifts to share.

3 Going on a Gift Hunt

Leader preparation: Before doing this activity, alert the minister and any other staff that youth will be seen on the move within and around the church. The purpose is to allow youth a chance to discover examples of gifts among the congregation and staff. Determine in advance what specific areas of the church youth will explore, such as the sanctuary, the fellowship hall, classrooms for adults or children, childcare areas, the garden, the building grounds in general, or the kitchen. Since the youth will be spread out during the hunt, decide in advance which youth would work best together, their assigned area to explore, and the allotted time for the hunt. Prepare a sheet of newsprint with the different areas to be explored so that the gifts discovered in the respective areas may be listed during the activity.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- gift-wrapped package
- note pad for each pair of youth
- pencil for each pair of youth
- prepared newsprint with a list of areas for exploration
- marker

Place a gift-wrapped package in front of the meeting space. As you greet everyone, tell them they’ll be hunting for examples of gifts of ministry in and around the church. Tell the youth to find and read Romans 12:6–8. Ask them to paraphrase the passage with a partner. According to scripture, the bottom line is that through the Holy Spirit people have been given different gifts for the good of everyone. Tell the group the task for them is to identify the different gifts of ministry observed in and around the church. As an example, ask them to visualize the greeters at worship services. Ask what gifts, talents, or skills these people bring to that role. Responses might include the gift of hospitality, caring about others, remembering names, or a welcoming smile.

Organize the youth in pairs, distribute note pads and pencils, and assign specific areas for exploration and observation. Remind the youth that their behavior as a hunter must reflect that expected in any house of worship. Before the youth depart, specify a time for everyone to be back in the meeting space. Post the prepared newsprint in the meeting space. When the youth reassemble, invite each pair to report on the gifts of ministry they observed. Record their ideas and

provide additional information about the gift, if appropriate. For example, if youth exploring outside the church noted the landscaping, a community crop garden, or recycling efforts, there may be an opportunity to comment on the ministry of the environmental committee and so forth.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 From the Heart (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The focus of this activity is to illustrate the Christian tradition of discernment through prayer and compassion. Discernment is a process that involves listening and looking for wise counsel and guidance from the Spirit of God. For the purposes of this experience, compassion can be defined as caring, loving kindness, or an emotional attachment to someone or something. The type of prayer the youth will be experiencing is called contemplative prayer, centering prayer, or prayer of the heart. It is a time for discernment.

Make a large heart out of red poster board or a large sheet of red construction paper. Cut up the heart into enough puzzle pieces for each youth to have one piece. Display a blank sheet of newsprint in the meeting space.

Supplies:

- red poster board or construction paper
- prepared puzzle pieces for a huge heart
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Give each person a puzzle piece, and invite the group to put their pieces together to form a vital organ. After they form a heart, write the words “compassion” and “heart” on a sheet of newsprint or the whiteboard. Ask the group what it would expect to see or hear from a person who has “compassion” or “heart.” Paraphrase the ideas youth offer and elaborate as needed to round out the definitions. Explain that compassion is needed when serving the needs of others. A particular prayer that incorporates the idea of compassion is called a prayer of the heart. This practice is a commitment to be with God in silence.

Invite the youth to find a comfortable place to sit, with good posture but relaxed. Ask them to close their eyes to free themselves of any distractions in the room. Tell youth to repeat the word “compassion” gently in their minds. Encourage them to give full attention to that word and allow it to push other thoughts out of their minds. Explain that as they become outwardly silent, inner noise may begin. Tell youth to give some attention to the thought or noise, hold it, and let it go. If they find this difficult to do, it only means that their attention has left God and gone somewhere else. Urge them to return to the special word and begin the process again. Suggest that some may find it easier to focus on their breath rather than the specified word. Tell them in advance that any intrusive or annoying sound effects are not welcomed during this activity.

After a 3–5 minute period of silence, end with these words of gratitude: *Thank you, O Listening and Speaking God, for this quiet time in your presence. Amen.*

5 A Smorgasbord of Gifts

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is for youth to appreciate the variety of intelligences each may have and how they might minister to others through their intelligences. In the 1980s Howard Gardner, a professor from

Harvard, developed a learning theory identifying nine different intelligences that illustrate how people learn and relate to the world—how they are “smart.” People use a combination of all nine intelligences, usually with strengths or a preference in a particular intelligence or two. The intelligences are designated as linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, naturalistic, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. For purposes of this activity, only eight of the intelligences will be used. To learn more about this theory, read the online article “Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory.”

Make a large pie-shaped diagram on a sheet of newsprint using the attachment “Symbols of Multiple Intelligences.” Decide how to paraphrase the ways one can be smart or gifted using the symbols as a prompt. Write the word “Smorgasbord” on a sheet of newsprint, and display it in the meeting space.

Supplies:

- prepared newsprint with the word “Smorgasbord”
- “Symbols of Multiple Intelligences,” Attachment: Activity 5
- prepared newsprint of “Symbols of Multiple Intelligences”
- one red, blue, and green dot stickers for each person
- computer and Internet access
- article: “Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory,” http://pbs.org/wnet/gperf/education/ed_mi_overview.html

Draw the participants’ attention to the prepared newsprint with the word “Smorgasbord,” and invite the youth to find a partner and talk about what they think this word means. After a few minutes of conversation, ask the group what they think the word means. After soliciting some responses, explain that a smorgasbord is a Swedish word that refers to a buffet-style spread of a variety of foods. It can also mean an extensive array or variety of something.

Invite the youth to recall the story from the Disney movie *Ratatouille*. Let a volunteer offer to explain (or just tell the group) that in this Parisian adventure the main character, a rat named Remy, follows his passion for cooking. Emphasize that it is Remy’s highly developed sense of taste and smell—along with his passion—that makes him successful. Tell youth they won’t be exploring those senses but other ways they can identify their gifts in serving others. Like Remy, each person has something she or he is really good at or enjoys doing.

Share the information about Howard Gardner and each of the multiple intelligences, using the “Symbols of Multiple Intelligences” pie-shaped diagram. Invite youth to think about what intelligence they feel is their preference or strongest area. Tell each person to place a red dot in that area. Invite youth to comment on the placement of their dots and what it might say about the group. Then have each participant place a blue dot on her or his second preference or strongest area and then a green dot on her or his least-preferential or weakest area. Invite the group to analyze what appear to be the hot and cold spots for the group. Share the following scenarios of service needs, and ask which youth might be the most effective filling the need according to the intelligences.

- The church is planning a songfest.
- A local soup kitchen is appealing for help.
- A community-wide garage sale needs to be organized.
- A neighbor can no longer tend a garden.
- A friend is trying to rearrange her bedroom.

Make the point that everybody on the circle has a niche to fill in sharing gifts with others. Emphasize that no dot on the circle is any more valuable than another.



6 A Fork in the Road

Leader preparation: The metaphor of a “fork in the road” is a great way of illustrating decision making. Youth make decisions every day. Some are easy; others hard. At this pivotal stage, youth are bombarded with so many things vying for their time and attention. In this activity youth may wrestle with decision making about some issues with which they or their peers may be dealing. Each group will also consider how discernment may play a role in decision making. Depending on group dynamics, each group could role-play how they handled the scenario rather than giving direct verbal feedback to the larger group.

Cut apart the copy of the attachment “Scenarios.” Bring a fork for this activity, the bigger the better. Write the following quotation on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard:

To be silent does not mean to be inactive; rather it means to breathe in the will of God; to listen attentively and be ready to obey.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*

Supplies:

- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with Bonhoeffer quotation
- large fork, such as a serving fork
- “Scenarios,” Attachment: Activity 6
- sheet of newsprint for each small group
- marker for each small group

Display the Bonhoeffer quotation, and invite someone to read it aloud. Ask the group to reflect on what this quote might mean.

Hold up the fork and explain that sometimes making decisions can be like seeing a fork in the road with options presented. Divide the group into five smaller groups alphabetically according to last names. Invite the youth to consider scenarios. They will have time to discuss it and then report back to the large group. Give each group a sheet of newsprint, marker, and a copy of one “Scenario.” Designate a group facilitator and a recorder. Explain that the facilitator is responsible for making sure everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion and for keeping the group focused on the scenario. The recorder is responsible for writing down the ideas the group has about the scenario and reporting back to the large group.

Tell the youth to consider all the decisions that need to be made in their respective scenarios and record them on the newsprint. This includes both good and bad, positive and negative decisions. As the groups are working, walk around and listen for the ease or difficulty the youth have in making decisions.

After they have had time to consider the scenarios, gather the groups back together and check in with them about their comfort level in making decisions. Invite them to share some of the factors they considered in making decisions, not just in solutions or resolutions but also in making the decisions. If they do not mention things like turning to God in prayer, seeking God’s will, looking at scripture, or talking with other faithful people, suggest these as possibilities. Ask them to look again at the Bonhoeffer quotation in light of the scenarios and the suggestions for discerning God’s will. Ask the groups if these things would influence or change their decision-making process.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Being Called (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on Ezekiel 2:1–8. God called upon Ezekiel to be the spokesperson among the Jews in exile who had turned their backs on God and begun worshipping pagan idols. Although it was a tough assignment, Ezekiel rose to the occasion. This activity will be an opportunity for the youth to recognize that in life everyone is called to do difficult tasks, but with God’s help the tasks can be accomplished. Display a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard with the title “Tough Decisions.”

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared sheet of newsprint or whiteboard
- marker

Invite the youth to read Ezekiel 2:1–8, and then ask them for examples of times when they have been asked to do something that was tough. If necessary, paraphrase the scripture first before asking the question. Be sure to record their thoughts on the newsprint or whiteboard. Reassure them that everyone at one time or another will be challenged to do something that’s difficult.

Using the examples the youth provided, invite them to say the phrase “We will, with God’s help” after an example has been expressed aloud in question form. For example:

Leader: Will you welcome those different than yourself into this fellowship?

Group: We will, with God’s help.

Leader: Will you speak what’s on your mind to this group?

Group: We will, with God’s help.

8 Gratefulness

Leader preparation: This activity targets gratefulness as a gift of ministry. In the busy-ness of the world, both adults and youth need to make an intentional decision on a daily basis to say “thank you” for their many blessings and gifts. Preview the video “Patrick Henry Hughes.”

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- video: “Patrick Henry Hughes,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xwCG0Ey2Mg>

There is a saying that comes from the Bible in Acts 20:35 that says, “It is more blessed to give than receive.” Explain that this often refers to things, but ask youth what they think this saying means in relationship to their gifts, skills, and abilities. Suggest that some of their gifts are yet to be discovered. Show the video “Patrick Henry Hughes” about a young man who has developed many gifts over time. Then offer this or a similar prayer of thanksgiving:

O God Our Creator, we give thanks for both serving and learning from others. You have blessed us with so many gifts. Help us to understand the gifts in each of us, so we may be faithful to your call. Amen.

 9 A Moment in Time

Leader preparation: Obtain, display, and reflect on the painting “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner. Think about all the gifts that could be discovered within this one piece of art. For youth, the obvious will probably be the gift of music, but there is so much more. Tanner was an African American painter whose work has been recognized both in the United States and Europe. In fact, he was the first black artist to have a painting hung in the White House. Youth may be interested to know that January 2012 marks the date when the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts launched a national tour of the exhibition “Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit.” Perhaps find a music recording of “Dueling Banjos” by Arthur Smith and a music player to set the stage for this fine arts experience.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.art.com/products/p10286254-sa-i677605/henry-ossawa-tanner-the-banjo-lesson.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=6ce32fa19f9d47aaa58758970c9f0162&searchstring=banjo+lesson>
- (optional) song: “Dueling Banjos” by Arthur Smith, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8reNgcIVFU&feature=related>

Invite the group just to sit back and listen to some banjo music. Invite everyone to look carefully at “Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner and be thinking about the gifts of ministry they see portrayed. Ask the group what gifts it has identified. If the group gets stuck with only the gift of music, be patient! Challenge them to look beyond the obvious. Ask about the focus or concentration of the figures with the banjo. Ask about the possible relationship between the two figures. As their thinking is stretched, they may discover the gift of human relationships, the art of teaching and learning, the pride and dignity of a African American artist, and other gifts also captured in this painting. End this activity with this or a similar prayer for musicians:

O God, bless this music that it might glorify your name. May your presence and beauty be found in every note, and may the words that are sung reach the hearts of all people so they will draw closer to you. As we move through every measure may we feel your peace, and proclaim your glory with glad voices. Amen.

Reflect

Think about the gifts you’ve discovered or rediscovered about yourself and the youth. Helping them find their niche to benefit God’s world has been your gift to them. Know that you have made a difference in their lives now and in the future. Thank you!

Symbols of Multiple Intelligences

Linguistic—Language Smart



Musical—Music Smart



Naturalistic—Nature Smart



Mathematical—Number Smart



Kinesthetic—Body Smart



Attachment: Activity 5 (Continued)

Interpersonal—People Smart



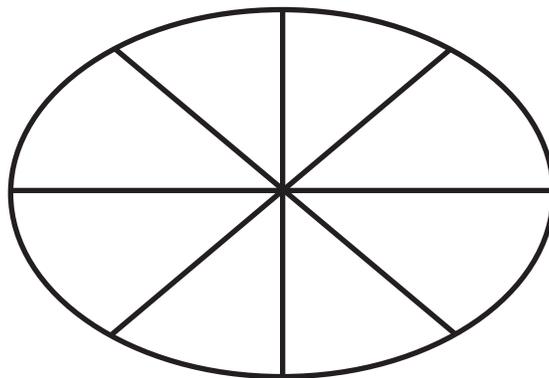
Intrapersonal—Self-Smart



Spatial—Picture Smart



Place one symbol of intelligence within each segment of an enlarged pie-shaped diagram.



Attachment: Activity 6

Scenarios

1. Jennifer, Lisa, and Kelsey are friends in seventh grade. Jennifer and Kelsey live in a low-income apartment complex with their families. All three girls ride the school bus home after school. Alicia and Amanda, both eighth graders, also ride the same bus in the afternoon. During the fall, Alicia and Amanda start repeatedly calling Jennifer and Kelsey “poor white trash” and make fun of their clothes and their uncut hair. One day, Lisa, frustrated with the on-going treatment of her friends, shouts at Alicia and Amanda, “Why don’t you two shut up and leave Jennifer and Kelsey alone!” Alicia gets up and hits Lisa and says, “You shut up! You’re just a stupid seventh grader. Why do you hang out with those two poor idiots any way?” What are some possible decisions that could be made in this situation?
2. Jill Cohen is Jewish and in the sixth grade. In October she missed a few days of school while her family observed Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. When Jill returned to school after Yom Kippur, she was teased by some of her classmates while walking home from school. Her classmates made comments about how Jews get special treatment at school and how Jews always have a lot of money. When Jill gets home, she is in tears and tells her mother what happened. Mrs. Cohen calls the school immediately and tells Jill’s homeroom teacher what happened. What are possible decisions that could be made in this situation?
3. Alexander, an eighth grader, is already sitting at a table in the cafeteria when Jonah and Dustin join him. They notice that the only thing he has to eat is a piece of bread. It has been this way for the past three weeks. Dustin pipes up and says, “What’s going on? Are you anorexic or something? Did your old man cut your allowance or kick you out of the house?” The comments were overheard by other students seated close by. Alexander just kept his eyes glued to the table and did not respond. What are possible decisions that could be made in this situation?
4. Henry is a special-education student who has a developmental delay. A group of three or four boys not only tease him but also set him up to do things against the school rules. Knowing that Henry would not know the difference between right and wrong, they tell him that they will be his friend if he’ll write all over a library book and stuff a nasty note in someone’s locker for them. Other kids know what’s going on, but they do nothing. What are possible decisions that could be made in this situation?
5. Cole is a middle school student who has had problems with his eyes since first grade. Just recently his doctor has required him to wear a patch over one eye and still wear his glasses. In the hallway at school, some of Cole’s friends start teasing him, calling him a “pirate” and greet him with “Ahoy, mate!” Cole just laughs with his friends and does not seem bothered by the comments. Anthony, another student that wears extra thick glasses hears the comments and is visibly upset. Mrs. Thomsen, the sixth-grade math teacher, and Mr. Beach, one of the custodians, see and overhear the interaction between Cole and his friends. In addition, both staff members saw Anthony’s reaction to the comments. What are possible decisions that could be made in this situation?

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

For youth a focus on scripture may conjure up visions of the past in memorizing Bible verses that may or may not have had meaning for them. Since their brains are not necessarily wired to stick to one topic for a long time, it may be challenging for some to stay connected with scripture. So be ready to celebrate when their light bulbs do go on and they get it. Some may initially dismiss the Bible as only an ancient book of “do’s and don’ts” and overlook its practical relevance to their lives. At this age, youth want space to question what they have been taught and explore in a safe, caring environment. Youth may need some “wait time” or “holding spaces” that will allow for exploration and discernment on how scripture shapes their identity as children of God within the church and in their lives outside the church walls.

About this Exploration

Scripture provides many examples of people discovering God-given talents that help them not only in their own lives but also in ministering to or caring for others. As Solomon discovered, gifts such as knowledge and a discerning mind are to be valued more highly than riches, long life, or power. Scripture, along with the community, inspires and affirms people in recognizing the different gifts they possess. Gifts of ministry allow people to play important roles in this world, in faith-related settings as well as in homes, workplaces, schools, and places of recreation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 3:3–15
Mark 1:14–20

Leader Preparation

Think about the Bible as a book of stories that communicates God’s relationship with humankind in the Old Testament, as with Jesus and the early church in the New Testament. Picture the Bible as a progressive revelation that always has relevance. Scripture calls us back to remember what is really the ultimate importance in life. “When you read God’s word, you must be constantly saying to yourself, ‘It is talking to me and about me,’” wrote Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian. Scholars as well as lay people still struggle to interpret and apply its teachings on a daily basis. Think about how you will respond when youth ask how scripture should be interpreted. You might want to talk with your pastor about your denomination’s understanding of scripture.

The Exploring & Engaging activities give youth an opportunity to discover scripture in motion, in prayer, and as story. The Discerning & Deciding activities allow youth to see more clearly that scripture can provide guidance in their daily lives, evoke meaning through images, and embed special meaning to language within a worship service. The Sending & Serving activities affirm that the reading of scripture can open lives to God and celebrate the gifts of youth both in the past and present. “It is a mistake to look to the Bible to close a discussion; the Bible seeks to open one” (William Sloane Coffin, UCC minister and peace and justice activist).

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Scripture in Motion (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is a community-building strategy in recreating images from scripture. Read and reflect on Mark 1:14–20. On a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard write the following scrambled names of disciples: TEPRE, DENRAW, ESAJM, and OHNJ. Display this in the meeting space. Be prepared for a noisier but meaningful way to recall the Word.

Supplies:

- Bible
- open meeting space
- marker
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard of scrambled names

As you greet the youth, challenge them to figure out the scrambled names posted. Check in with them and ask what they already know about these four individuals. Remind them that Peter, Andrew, James, and John—the first disciples—did not seek Jesus out, but it was he who sought them. Ask them to try to visualize the scripture in Mark 1:14–20 as it is read by a volunteer.

Invite the youth to think back to Peter, Andrew, James, and John again, and inquire about what they think these four men had in common. Of course, they were all fishermen, but the group may also see or project other commonalities. Ask: *What may have been the qualities Jesus saw in these men that attracted him to them?* Invite the youth to stand together in an open space for some “sculpture in motion.” Explain that sometimes images help develop a story line. Tell them they must work together using their bodies to represent the following images: the sea of Galilee, a fish, a fishing net, mending a fishing net, disciples of Jesus, the phrase “follow me,” and brotherly love. Ask what contemporary people immediately come to mind when the youth think about disciples of Jesus. Ask why they thought of these specific people.

2 Oldie, but a Goodie

Leader preparation: One form of prayer, Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading), uses scripture to guide us. Instead of reading the Bible “to cover the material” or “get through a whole book or chapter,” Lectio Divina invites us to read slowly a very short passage. Go to the video “Lectio Divina” and preview how Father Matthews explains Lectio Divina in a youth-friendly way. Prepare a sheet of newsprint or whiteboard with the heading “Lectio Divina,” followed by the four steps as outlined in the video: read it, chew it, pray about it, and be in God’s presence.

Supplies:

- Bible
- chewy candy bars for each person
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- video: “Lectio Divina,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJfbahwMpdU>
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with steps for “Lectio Divina”
- marker

As you greet the youth, inquire about what prayers they may have heard or said in their early childhood. Remind them that prayer is like a direct connection to God—it’s a chance to talk back and forth, discuss, and respond to one another.

Prayer: *O God, please be with me as I lead this journey through your living revelation. Take my hand as a loving Spirit to inspire me, to free my mind from any distractions, and to bestow upon the youth an appreciation for your Holy Word. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

This activity offers one example of approaching God through the form of prayer called “Lectio Divina,” an ancient tradition of contemplative praying based on scripture.

Hand out some chewy candy bars, and tell everyone they need to wait for a cue from a guest teacher before they start eating. Explain they will be learning about a method of praying called “Lectio Divina,” meaning “sacred reading.” Invite them to focus on the prepared newsprint or whiteboard, and introduce the format of “Lectio Divina” by identifying each step. Then play the video “Lectio Divina.”

Go back to the newsprint or whiteboard and ask the group to recall a more formal descriptor for each step of Father Matthew’s Recipe for “Lectio Divina.” For example, *lectio* would be the synonym for “read it.” The other formal descriptors include *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. Use Luke 5:1–11 for a group “Lectio Divina.” Tell the youth the Word of God needs to work its way into all the parts of their being so they are formed more and more in the image of Christ. That indeed is a gift of ministry. Invite the youth to silently reflect on the steps in the recipe for this form of prayer.



3 I Love to Tell the Story

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on 1 Kings 3:3–15 and Mark 1:14–20. This activity gives the group the opportunity to recognize scripture as a story and appreciate the significance of a familiar hymn. Obtain a musical recording of “I Love to Tell the Story” (tune: Hankey) and a music player (or find it in a hymnal). Preview the lyrics of “I Love to Tell the Story” on the attachment. Go to the online article “History of I Love to Tell the Story” to discover the song’s origin.

Supplies:

- Bible
- hymn: “I Love to Tell the Story” by Katherine Hankey (tune: Hankey), <http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh156.sht>
- recording of “I Love to Tell the Story”
- music player
- “I Love to Tell the Story,” Attachment: Activity 3
- (optional) article: “History of I Love to Tell the Story,” <http://www.kin-nexions.com/smlsource/story.htm>

As you greet the youth, ask them to think about what information is needed to tell a story. Possible responses might be an event, some characters, a setting, some action or conflict. Have them find and read the lyrics for “I Love to Tell the Story” from a hymnal or from the attachment. Share the information you gathered about the history of the song, if desired. Invite the youth to sing along with the music recording.

Encourage the youth to recall when they heard a Bible story that especially struck them or was meaningful to them. Invite them to find a partner and tell the story as if that person had never heard it before. Affirm that the Bible is indeed a book of many stories. Originally the story would have been passed on orally and then reduced to writing many years later. Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Kings 3:3–15 or Mark 1:14–20 as an example of story in scripture. Stories in the Bible or God’s Word are a gift of ministry.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Help! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is designed to raise awareness among youth to seek God’s counsel. Read and reflect on 1 Kings 3:3–15. Solomon establishes his kingdom, defeating potential enemies, and seeks to follow his father’s instructions. But his love for God hasn’t prevented pagan ways from infiltrating his worship. When Solomon meets God in a dream, God asks him what he wants. Solomon opts for a discerning heart so he’ll know right from wrong. In other words, he asked for help because he wasn’t up to the job of King. God agrees to give him a wise and discerning heart. Obtain the items listed under supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- half sheet of 8½” × 11” paper for each person
- pencil for each person

Ask the youth what they think most people would do if assigned to do something they weren’t prepared for or had some doubts about whether they’d be successful. Solomon struggled with some of the same or similar issues the group will probably have discussed. Challenge youth to find out what he did by reading silently 1 Kings 3:3–15. Ask for a volunteer or the person whose birthday is closest to today’s date to read the passage aloud. Ask youth to turn to a neighbor and explain the scripture in their own words. Paraphrase the passage aloud for the group so participants can check for understanding. Emphasize that it was both God’s gift of wisdom and Solomon’s decision to ask for God’s help that made him successful.

Ask whether the youth think most people admit they need help or advice. Why or why not? Count off by threes to form groups. Invite each person within a group to draw a cartoon including either a caption or speech bubbles illustrating a situation where scripture might give comfort or guidance to a person in need of a spiritual lift. If necessary, offer some scenarios—a family whose home was destroyed by fire, a family who just adopted a child, a person who has learned that she’s free of a disease, and so forth. Then give the youth time to share their cartoons within their group. Monitor the groups as they work independently so you can summarize some of the ideas you saw and heard. Ask how seeking God’s counsel is related to finding one’s gift of ministry. Remind them that God’s counsel is a gift for all of us.

5 Sacred Circles

Leader preparation: The symbolism of a circle can be found in many different religions. In early Christian churches visages of sacred circles have been found in line drawings to share stories and tell them orally to people who were unable to read the stories for themselves. In contemporary times, stained-glass windows in churches and cathedrals offer another symbolic representation of the Holy. Preview the website “Mandala Gallery” and the video “Mandala Maker” to determine which you prefer to use.

Although a sacred circle is the organizer, the purpose of this activity is to raise awareness that scripture offers examples of gifts of ministry. Make a copy of “Sacred Circles” attachment for each group of nine youth. The scripture represented on the sacred circle illustrates the following ministry of gifts: craftsmanship, music, hospitality, leadership, serving, giving thanks, peace and hope, fellowship,

and a heart's desire. Since this is a cooperative learning experience, no sacred circle will be complete without a contribution from each youth. Think about how the groups should be determined.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- website: "Mandala Gallery," <http://www.mandalagallery.com/>
- video: "Mandala Maker," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTj8r1UtlO8>
- "Sacred Circles," Attachment: Activity 5 (copy for each group of nine youth)
- sheet of newsprint for each group
- multiple sets of colored pencils for each group
- scissors for each group
- glue sticks for each group

Ask youth to recall what they have noticed about the designs or patterns in kaleidoscopes. Responses might include coordinating colors, geometric shapes, symmetrical designs, intricate details and so forth. Invite them to create their own version of a kaleidoscope in the form of a mandala or sacred circle. Use the website "Mandala Gallery" or the video "Mandala Maker" to offer some illustrative examples. Explain that although mandalas are typically associated with other religious traditions, visages of sacred circles have also been found in early Christian churches as drawings on walls to communicate stories for people who were unable to read them for themselves. Tell them they will be making one mandala per group that must include symbols that match the respective scripture they chose to represent on the sacred circle.

After each group gathers in a space that provides the least amount of distractions, invite youth to discuss among themselves how they will keep their mandala cohesive. Distribute one set of the "Sacred Circles" to each group. Tell them each group member looks up a different scripture reading to determine what symbol or image they need to incorporate into the design. For example, whoever chooses Psalm 33:3 will think about the gift of music and how it could be represented. If you have fewer than nine people or multiples of nine, some may choose to take two scriptures to represent. Choose the number of scripture passages that fits the number of people you have.

At a given signal, invite group members to share their scripture and image within their group. Invite the youth to assemble their group's sacred circle on a sheet of newsprint using glue sticks, and then put it on display.



6 Scripture Between the Lines

Leader preparation: All parts of a worship service are usually based on scripture in some way—songs, prayers, sermons, and so forth. While there is a direct connection when a specific Bible passage is cited, on other occasions it may require reading between the lines or a discerning mind to determine the link. The purpose of this activity is for youth to decide implied meanings in two different benedictions. Benedictions were a feature of the synagogue in Christ's time—in fact, Christ used them when he dismissed his disciples on a new task. Preview and prepare a copy of "Reading Scripture between the Lines" for each group of three to five.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- "Reading Scripture between the Lines," Attachment: Activity 6
- pencil for each group

Ask youth what's the typical inspiration for the songs, prayers, and sermon topic within a worship service. If the group is stumped, just tell them it's the scripture reading that provides the basis for other choices made within a worship service. Sometimes lyrics of a song or words in a prayer or a benediction are written that don't reference any specific Bible book or verse, but there are clues that it was based on scripture. Explain that it's also the congregation's knowledge of the Bible that adds meaning to the reading of scripture.

Divide the youth into groups of three to five individuals and provide one pencil and a Bible to each group. Distribute a copy of "Reading Scripture between the Lines" to each group. Using only their recall of Bible stories in general, challenge the groups to interpret each line of the benedictions. The question would be: *What stories in the Bible were the authors of these benedictions probably thinking about?* For example, when God is described as shaking heaven and earth, the interpretation could be that God is powerful or maybe God is angry. Put the emphasis on the group conversation as opposed to one correct interpretation.

After a specified work period, pair the groups to share and compare their best thinking about the source for the thoughts within each benediction. Monitor the group discussions, reassemble the youth, and summarize what you heard the groups talking about. Understanding scripture is one way to be closer to God.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 September 11th (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Probably for most adults and perhaps some youth, the date of September 11 only conjures up an image of terror. However, in April 2009, President Obama designated that date to be observed as a National Day of Service and Remembrance. With the emphasis on service, this activity provides the youth an opportunity to find examples from scripture to validate that the Bible speaks volumes about serving others. Read and make a list of these Bible verses on a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard:

- 1 Peter 4:10 –11
- Acts 20:35
- Galatians 5:13–14
- Matthew 20:28

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard listing Bible verses

Ask the group to think about an awful situation that later turned out okay. Provide an example such as someone missing a flight but then switching airlines and reaching their destination sooner than their original flight plan. Ask the youth what comes to mind when they hear the date September 11 or 9/11. Ask: *What good has come from the terroristic attack and horrific loss of life and property on that date?* Some prompts may be needed to identify a specific example. Explain that President Obama designated the date to be a National Day of Service and Remembrance. Ask the youth what gifts of service they can do. Explain that the Bible has many examples of verses advocating service to others.

Divide the youth arbitrarily into four groups and assign one verse to each to find and read silently. Select one person from each group to read the assigned Bible verse aloud. Ask how each scripture passage gives guidance to the ministry of gifts.



8 Celebrating the Gifts of Youth

Leader preparation: Copy and preview the litany “Celebrating the Gifts of Youth,” Attachment: Activity 8. Prepare a sheet of newsprint with the group response and a list of the biblical characters as they are introduced within the litany. Review for yourself the story surrounding each character if it is unfamiliar. For example: Miriam saved the baby Moses from the Pharaoh by hiding him among the reeds at the edge of the river; Esther revealed to her husband that she was an Israelite and then appealed to him not to kill the Jews; and Jarius’s daughter at the point of near death was revived by Jesus. All these people were young.

Supplies:

- “Celebrating the Gifts of Youth,” Attachment: Activity 8
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with the list of biblical characters and the litany response

Display the prepared newsprint in the meeting space. Invite the youth to review the list of biblical characters, and challenge them to identify the ones whose story they’re familiar with. Based on the responses, talk about the stories associated with the remaining characters. Invite them to participate in a special prayer that names these individuals. Explain that the format of the prayer is known as a litany that uses a “call and response” pattern between a leader and a group. Let them know the leader’s words serve as a cue for a response, in this case from the youth. Read the litany with the youth responding. Ask the youth what gifts they want to be remembered for.

9 Send Me

Leader preparation: Be prepared to explain what a benediction is and where it occurs in a church service, if youth don’t already know. Just as a church congregation begins a worship service with an extravagant welcome, it also ends with a blessing of the Holy Spirit. It’s important that youth know that the Holy Spirit is always with them throughout the week. Preview the lyrics of “Send Me.” Arrange for a piano accompaniment or musical recording and a music player.

Supplies:

- song: “Send Me” by Bryan Sirchio, http://sirchio.com/index.php?page=songs&family=worship&category=Something_Beautiful_For_God-col-24_Songs_For_Worship_and_Group_Singing&display=953
- accompanist and piano or music recording and music player

Ask youth what they already know about the word “benediction.” Depending on the responses, add whatever information that may be needed. In regard to its derivation, the word comes from Latin, *bene* meaning “good” or “well” and *dicere* meaning “to speak.” Explain that it is a short blessing, giving good words to the congregation as they are sent out to do ministry at the end of worship. Remind youth that it is the Holy Spirit at work in them through scripture. Sometimes a benediction may be in the form of a song. Invite the youth first to listen to and then to sing the song “Send Me.” Follow up with a discussion about the lyrics. Ask in what ways do the lyrics connect with today’s Exploration. End with a prayer.

Merciful God, we come to you this day with open minds to be changed into your service. You called us to be your people and to share with others the richness of your love. Help us to understand the gifts in each of us, so we may also be faithful to your call. Amen.

Reflect

Think about which scripture passages or stories have been the biggest influence on your life. Think about the words in 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” What indicators among youth show that scripture has meaning in drawing them closer to God? To what degree are the youth equipped to serve God like the scriptures describe?

Attachment: Activity 3

I Love to Tell the Story

Lyrics by Katherine Hankey

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus' radiant glory, of Jesus' endless, love.
I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

Refrain:

I love to tell the story; and when I am in glory
I'll tell the old, old story of Jesus' endless love.

I love to tell the story; more wonderful it seems
than all the golden visions of all our golden dreams.
I love to tell the story, I tell it now to you
because I want to share it, because I know it's true.

Refrain

I love to tell the story; it's pleasant to repeat
what seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

Refrain

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest.
And when I sing in glory, I know the new, new song
will be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Refrain

Attachment: Activity 5

Sacred Circles

Directions:

- Each person in a group of nine should read only one scripture passage.
- Draw a symbol in the circle for the gift described.
- All pieces of the sacred circle must blend together when joined.

Scripture Passages:

Exodus 30:22-25

Psalms 33:3

Acts 16:14-15

1 Timothy 5:7

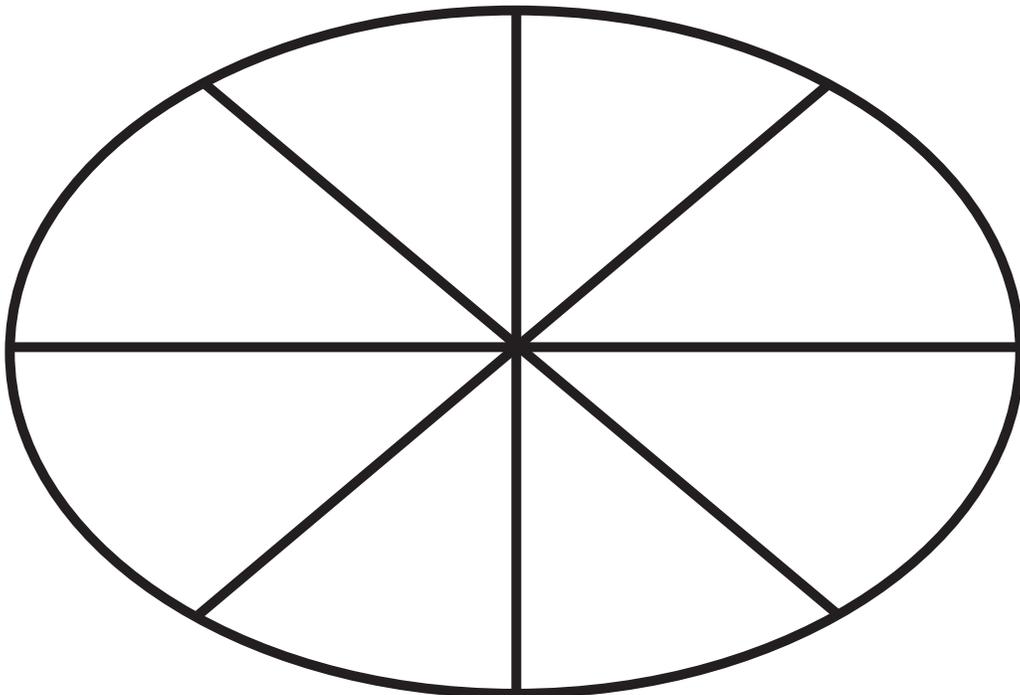
Mark 15:40-41

Colossians 4:2

Jeremiah 29:11

Acts 2:42

Psalms 20:4



Attachment: Activity 6

Reading Scripture between the Lines

May the God who shakes heaven and earth,
whom death could not contain,
who lives to disturb and heal us,
bless you with power to go forth
and proclaim the gospel. Amen.

Now let us go forth to serve, to welcome and to bless.

As Jesus freely poured out his life for us,
may we freely share our lives with others.

We pray in the name of the all-merciful,
ever hospitable Jesus. Amen.

Celebrating the Gifts of Youth

Leader: We remember Miriam, courageous and clever, who protected her family.

Youth: **We celebrate the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember Jeremiah, who was not too young to become a prophet.

Youth: **We celebrate the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember David, chosen in spite of his youth, anointed for tasks of the future.

Youth: **We remember the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember Esther, born for “such a time as this,” resourceful in justice.

Youth: **We remember the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember Mary, welcoming an angel, singing a song, bearing a child.

Youth: **We remember the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember Jesus in the temple, insisting on the adult questions, the adult answers.

Youth: **We remember the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember Jairus’s daughter, brought back to life and possibility.

Attachment: Activity 8 (Continued)

Youth: **We celebrate the gifts of youth.**

Leader: We remember Timothy, learning from past generations, but kindling his own call.

Youth: **We celebrate the gifts of all young people.**

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Just as the disciples trusted Jesus, the youth need to trust that leaders care about them. Unless the social and emotional needs of youth are met, time and energy spent in preparing these activities will have been wasted. Their honesty, their belief that they are invincible, and their desire to make a difference in the world are all characteristics of youth ripe for discipleship in a meaningful way. Let them know that the only way to be happy, according to Albert Schweitzer, is to find how to serve.

About this Exploration

Jesus extends the invitation to come, follow me. We are asked to trust that our gifts, talents, and interests may be used by God for the ministry that is before us. We are not asked first to learn more or begin afresh in order to be noticed by Jesus, but rather to hear the Spirit's call and come just as we are. Through this invitation we are encouraged to place our confidence in God, who is able to work through our open hands and hearts that are offered to the church, community, and world. If we have doubts about our abilities or qualifications, we can be encouraged by the countless Biblical stories that remind us that God always chooses and uses the least of these. Come, let's follow!

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 15:15–21
Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26

Leader Preparation

Take time to reflect on the variety of ways people in your congregation serve God. Some will be people whose efforts are seen weekly, but there will be others who have been working behind the scenes. Think of your congregation as a village of disciples raising its youth to know the glory of God.

The “Exploring & Engaging” activities challenge youth to think about Jesus as a role model, their willingness to follow him, and evidence of people spreading the “good news.” The “Discerning & Deciding” activities confirm that everybody can be a disciple of Christ if they’re listening to God’s call. The “Sending & Serving” activities reinforce that God is still speaking, demonstrate that discipleship can be portrayed in different ways, and that just one person can make a difference.

Prayer: O Gracious God, give me and the youth the steadfastness to seek you, the wisdom to see you, and the patience to wait for you like your disciples. May our thinking about your life, listening to your Word, and feeling the power of your being on our hearts prepare us to be your disciples today and every day. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Recruitment (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate that a Christian needs only to follow Jesus. Print this quotation on newsprint or a whiteboard:

It is well-known that Christ consistently used the expression, “follower.” He never asks for admirers, worshippers, or adherents. No, he calls disciples. It is not adherent of a teaching, but followers of a life Christ is looking for.

—Søren Kierkegaard

Be prepared to explain the word “adherent.” Think about how to explain the meaning of this quotation in a contemporary context. The following background information may be helpful. The word “disciple” comes from the Latin *discipulus* meaning “to learn.” Thus the disciples were really learners, pupils, or apprentices of Jesus charged with telling others about his amazing life.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard with quote

Greet the youth and ask them to think about why the church needs them. Accept all of their ideas without comment unless it is to build upon them. Post the Kierkegaard quote and give the youth a moment to read the quotation and think about it. Ask them what they think the significance of the quote is.

Introduce the acronym WWJD—“What would Jesus do?” Ask them how that acronym fits or doesn’t fit with Kierkegaard’s thinking. Invite them to think back over the past week and decide for themselves if there was something they did that would have been the same as Jesus would have done, such as a youth who opted to help a new student or an elderly relative. Tell them again to think about how Jesus led his life. Encourage everyone to commit to WWJD.

2 An Invitation

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to give youth a chance to evaluate their level of willingness to follow Jesus. Make a copy of the lyrics of “The Summons” for each person. Take time to reflect on the meaning of the lyrics and how the words could be changed to be more inclusive.

Supplies:

- hymn: “The Summons” by John Bell (tune: Kelvingrove); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0aAkOe87mo&feature=related>; lyrics, <http://www.spiritandsong.com/compositions/30338>
- music player

Greet everyone and ask when and where they have most recently been called upon, asked, or summoned to do something. Randomly solicit some of their experiences. For example, Mom calls them to the dinner table, a friend invites them over to spend the night, or they are invited to stand in front of their classmates to accept an award. Tell them that they will be hearing about a different type of “summons” that might require some “think time.”

Distribute the lyrics to “The Summons,” and invite the youth to listen to the music. Assign each person a number from one to five. Tell the “1s” to review the lyrics in the first stanza, the “2s” the second stanza, and so forth. Invite everyone

to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

to offer how they would respond to the questions in their respective assigned stanza or if they could respond. Ask: *Which questions were easier to answer in the affirmative? Which were more challenging to respond to?* Invite the youth to sing the song.

3 Up with People

Leader preparation: Frequently print, television, and radio broadcasts feature how people, individually and/or collectively, have fallen short in emulating Christ. Sometimes it takes a deliberate effort to celebrate the difference many people do make in caring for all that lives on planet Earth. Be sure that multiple copies of local or national newspapers are available for youth to peruse. The purpose of this activity is for the youth to find examples of people individually or collectively making a positive difference in the world.

Supplies:

- multiple copies of different newspapers
- scissors

As you greet the youth, ask them what was the best thing that happened to them the past week. After acknowledging some of the good news the youth shared, comment that sometimes the daily news is weighed down with everything that’s wrong in the world rather than featuring what’s right. Explain to the youth that they will be working with a partner to find examples of “good news” by cutting out newspaper articles that illustrate just that. Ask the youth to line up by height from shortest to tallest, and then identify pairings. After a specified period of time, invite everyone to share what they consider their best piece of news. Extend this activity as time permits. Congratulate the group on zeroing in on “good news.”

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Everybody Counts (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: All youth probably aren’t convinced that they can make a difference in this world. They may feel inadequate or powerless in the whole scope of things. The purpose of this activity is for youth to recognize that each one of them counts as a disciple or follower of Christ. Preview and make a copy of the attachment “Everybody Counts.” Think about how to assign the five different parts of this skit. If you think it would be helpful to youth, highlight respective parts of the skit with different colored markers, or circle each speaker’s lines in advance.

Supplies:

- “Everybody Counts,” Attachment: Activity 4
- props: Bible, two backpacks, earphones, and candy

Tell youth that if there are times when they may feel like they can make little or no impact on the world, reassure them that older youth and even adults can feel that way, too. Let them know that occasionally adults may have doubts about what God wants them to do or if they can do what God wants. Distribute a copy of “Everybody Counts” to five volunteers. Give the volunteers a few moments to read the skit, and let them know their director will be there to help them. Cue the narrator to begin the skit.

After the skit, challenge the youth to explain how they may be like or unlike the youth who was trying to figure out God’s plan. Ask what gifts of ministry youth could share with others right now.

5 Who's Out and Who's In?

Leader preparation: Think about your own comfort level being around people who are different from you. Have you ever felt that you didn't fit in with a certain crowd? These same issues are on the minds of youth because they so desperately want to be included. Preview the video "The United Church of Christ Steeples Ad." Think about how you can both challenge and affirm youth as they dissect the message in this television ad.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- video: "The United Church of Christ Steeples Ad," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-zLzwo7QV4>

Ask: *Where and when have you felt most included? Where and when have you felt most excluded?* Reassure them that adults also have times when they feel they belong and other occasions when they feel out of place. If anyone is confident enough to share their feelings, encourage them to tell the group both their positive and less than positive experiences in group settings. View the video "The United Church of Christ Steeples Ad." Let the group discuss how they think the video is related to the ministry of Jesus. Ask: *What one word seems to be the most important in the message?* Although the answer is only the three letter word "all," ask what the word really means. If youth are hesitant to respond, tell them to rerun the video in their minds and pay close attention to the people they see. Tell them the message in this ad is not new. Ask for a volunteer to read from Ephesians 2:19–22.

As a follow-up to the discussion, challenge the participants to honestly evaluate if they could say "yes" to the following questions:

- Are all youth welcomed at their church?
- Are all students welcomed at their school?
- Are all families welcomed in their neighborhood?

If not, ask them how they could help to change an unwelcoming environment. Although that expectation may seem daunting, reassure them that one person can make a difference.



6 Phone Tag

Leader preparation: Although youth sometimes show an impatience to move on from a topic once they feel they understand it, discerning what discipleship is and the will of God is a life-long process. The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate that listening for God's call, hearing it, and then acting on it is applying the teachings of Jesus in real life. God's partnership with humankind needs to be constantly renewed. Preview the video "I'm Pretty Sure God Is Calling You" and decide how much of it you wish to share. In addition, preview a copy of the attachment "God Is Calling."

Supplies:

- computer and Internet access
- digital projector
- video: "I'm Pretty Sure God Is Calling You," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9GKYytwXic>
- "God Is Calling," Attachment: Activity 6

Tell the group that the upcoming video will be deafening. Show only a portion of the video “I’m Pretty Sure God Is Calling You.” Ask the youth to offer some examples of where and when they think God has been calling them to do something in particular. Check to see if anyone feels they may have missed a call. Nobody needs to raise their hands. Reassure everyone that God will forgive them for not picking up the phone, but God will be expecting the call to be answered the next time. End the activity with the litany “God Is Calling,” inviting youth to respond, “We follow him.” Think about whether your particular group could comfortably share the role of the leader. If so, there will be even more discipleship in action.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Imagine What’s Possible (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity will reinforce when in discipleship God is still speaking. This special prayer is in the format of a litany. There is a “call and response” between the leader and group members. The leader’s words serve as a cue to when a congregation, or in this case the youth, are to respond. Make a copy of the attachment “Imagine What’s Possible.” To add more interest to the experience, make a notation on newsprint or a whiteboard about how the response should be spoken each time. For example, the first time the whole group could respond, the second time only the girls, and the third time just the boys, and so forth.

Supplies:

- “Imagine What’s Possible,” Attachment: Activity 7

Invite the youth to participate in a litany—a prayer in a special form. Explain that litany-type prayers are characterized by a ritual of “give and take” between the leader and the rest of the group. The leader’s words serve as a cue for the group’s response. Display the prepared sheet of newsprint for the group response. Ask that the responses follow the pattern of whole group response, only girls respond and then boys and so forth. Remind the youth that anything is possible with God in their lives. Following the litany, urge youth to take time during the week to reflect on their gifts and how God could use them.



8 Marker Talk

Leader preparation: Sometimes youth may become bored of “talk, talk, and more talk.” This activity, however, may be an uncomplicated silent reflection or a spirited one, but a silent exchange of ideas. The process may surprise everyone in finding out how much is collectively communicated about a topic. Obtain and display “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” (c.1912) by Gustav Klimt. In addition, post several sheets of newsprint side by side on a wall near the artwork in front of the meeting space. Be sure a sufficient number of markers are available as noted in the list of supplies.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Farm Garden with Sunflowers” by Gustav Klimt, <http://www.art.com/products/p15177883-sa-i3715775/gustav-klimt-farm-garden-with-sunflowers-c1912.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=klimt+farm+garden+with+sunflowers>
- sheets of newsprint on display
- marker for each person

Invite the youth to take an upfront and personal view of “Farm Garden with Sunflowers.” The artwork will play a significant role in an activity known as “Marker Talk.” Explain that it is a silent activity, so no one may talk. Inform everyone that anyone may add to the activity as they wish. Encourage them to comment on other people’s ideas simply by drawing a connecting line to the comment. Demonstrate the process by using this sample question or one of your own: *What do you think about Lady Gaga?* Then begin adding comments.

To get started, write one of the following questions in the middle of a sheet of newsprint and circle it.

- What messages could this artist be saying about discipleship?
- What might the diversity of flowers in this farm garden have to do with discipleship?
- What would you add to this painting that would represent discipleship more clearly?

Hand markers to everyone, place several near the posted newsprint, or hand several markers to people at random. Invite the youth to write when they feel moved. There will likely be periods of long silence—so be patient and allow plenty of wait time before deciding the activity is completed. As an observer, be prepared to stand back and let the activity unfold or expand the thinking by circling interesting ideas, writing a question about a comment, adding your own ideas, or connecting two comments together with a line and adding a question mark.

Invite the youth to bow their heads in prayer: *O God, eternal wisdom, you are always teaching us in every flower, every bird, every human being you have created. We ask your blessings over these young people you have called to be your servants in the service of our congregation. Guide them with your Holy Spirit, so they can show in their own lives the love that comes from you. Help us as a community of faith to pass on to others the faith that sustains us in our daily lives, and to understand how to be your disciples. In Christ we pray. Amen.*

Reflect

Reflect on 1 Timothy 4:12: “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” Think about where youth began and where they are now in their faith formation. Keep in mind that God doesn’t call the qualified; God qualifies the called. Challenge yourself to continue to respect and encourage their discipleship and leadership.

9 Power of One

Leader preparation: Youth may sometimes become discouraged and feel they don’t make a difference in the world. This activity may help lessen any doubt they may have. Preview the video “The Power of One” and think about how just one thing can make a difference.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- video: “The Power of One,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOLj_Jca-ZcM

Remind the youth that each one of them is a disciple of Jesus. They have made and will continue to make a difference in this world. View the video “The Power of One.” Give participants a brief time to reflect and talk about what they saw. Indeed, the power of one person can make a difference. Amen.

Attachment: Activity 4

Everybody Counts

Narrator: One member of a youth group is sitting alone with a Bible in a fellowship hall before a meeting. He's trying to figure out how he can become a disciple and offer God's gifts to God. The youth group has been discussing this topic. In the process he interacts with several other members of the group.

Youth #1 runs into the fellowship hall and engages youth #2 who's sitting alone in a conversation.

#1 Man, I don't know what to do.

#2 What do you mean by that?

#1 I really messed up in my math class today. We're having a test tomorrow, and I threw all my notes away by accident.

#2 Who do you have as a teacher? Maybe I can help!

#1 Well, it's Mr. Anthony in third period. If you don't keep up with him, it's easy to get lost. There's just no "wiggle" room in a math class. You either get it, or you don't.

#2 I completely understand what you mean. I have Mr. Anthony for fifth period. I just happen to have my notes in my backpack. I could review them with you if you want! I could help at least to get you back on track.

#1 You really would do that for me? Wow, I'm so glad that we have some time before the rest of the kids get here tonight.

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

Narrator: The two young people put their heads together for about ten or fifteen minutes reviewing the math notes.

#2 Was that helpful for you? Math is one of my stronger subject areas. Usually I catch on to the ideas fairly easily, and I keep good notes.

#1 You just saved my grade in math. Without your help, I don't know what I would have done. There isn't really anybody in my family who could have bailed me out. Thanks! Oh, by the way, why were you sitting here with a Bible?

#2 Oh, I was just spending a little quiet time with God.

#1 That's great!

#2 Yeah, I've been really struggling with what God wants me to do with my life.

#1 Yeah?

#2 Yeah, I mean I know I want to serve God, but I just don't know how to do it. It just seems like if you really want to make a difference, you've got to have real talent, a lot of money, or really be somebody special.

#1 What do you mean?

#2 Well, you know, like having some brilliant idea on how to help the people in Haiti, or families who are starving, or children who need medical care.

#1 Sounds like you want to save the whole world.

#2 But I haven't had much experience, or any connections, or the confidence to make a difference like that. I mean I want to serve, but I don't know how God wants me to do it.

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

Youth #3 speaks loudly, from just inside the hall.

#3 Man, it sure is hot out there! I was cruising pretty well until I dumped everything out of my backpack. It's going to take me forever to figure out this mess.

Youth #2 speaking to youth #1.

#2 Keep reviewing my notes. I'll be right back.

Youth #2 sees youth #3 with the contents of a backpack spread out on the floor.

#2 Looks like you could use some help.

#3 Yeah, I sure could. I'm not very good at organizing stuff. I really need to have a better way to keep stuff together.

#2 Do you mind if I give you a hand?

#3 Oh, you don't need to fool around with this junk.

Youth #2 is bending down to pick up some of the stuff on the floor.

#2 Don't worry about it. It's no big deal. You just need to sort things according to your class schedule.

#3 Thanks so much. It would have taken me all night to figure out how to put everything together again. I think my whole life is in this backpack. I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll buy you a can of soda before our meeting starts.

#2 Thanks, but you don't have to do that. I just enjoy helping people out.

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

#3 Well, thanks again. See you later.

Youth #2 walks back over to the youth #1 reviewing math notes.

#2 Anyway, like I was saying, I just want to do something important with my life, but I never feel like I'm being much of a help to anyone.

#1 What are you talking about? What makes you think you need to be some big important person to change somebody's life?

#2 Look at all the people who are making a difference in the world: Justin Bieber supports kids in Texas who lost their parents in a car accident and they themselves ended up paralyzed. David Beckham, the British soccer star, helps children and adults with special needs. And even the author of Harry Potter supports, educates, and advocates for single parents. Of course, there's Brad and Angelina adopting babies, and Oprah is trying to help, well, everyone.

#1 Are you telling me that you can't help people in need or help kids get healthy because you don't have any star power?

#2 No, of course not, but I'm just one person. The impact I make is just one drop in the ocean.

#1 Well, maybe it takes a while for the ripples of that drop to be felt. But it still makes an impact.

Youths #1 and #2 are interrupted by youth #4, who is really zoned out, wearing ear-phones and walking right toward them.

#2 Hey, we're in the middle of a conversation!

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

Youth #4 pulls off the earphones.

#4 What did you say?

#2 I said that you butted into our conversation.

#4 Hey, I'm sorry! I'm really bummed out because my parents won't let me attend the concert this weekend. I was really in a world of my own and trying to bury myself in music. I guessed it worked pretty well because I didn't even see you.

#2 I sometimes listen to music, too, when I'm trying to get my mind off things. I'm just glad none of us ended up on the floor.

#4 Gee, I'm really sorry! Here, take the rest of the candy I've been gorging on. I'd like you to have it.

#2 You don't have to do that.

#4 No, I insist. You saved me from making a fool out of myself. It's the least I can do. I won't take no for an answer.

Youth #4 hands youth #2 the rest of the candy.

#2 Thank you! We appreciate it.

#4 No, thank you! You helped me get back to reality. See you at the meeting!

#2 You, too.

Youth #4 leaves. Youth #2 turns back to youth #1.

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

#1 That certainly was unusual. Are you okay?

#2 Who me? Oh sure, I just hope he can get over his disappointment. I look forward to hearing his ideas at our meetings. He usually has a great sense of humor, too.

#1 I think someone is trying to tell you something.

#2 What? You think he likes me?

#1 I don't know about that, but like you said. You were in the right place at the right time.

#2 So?

#1 It's what I was trying to say before we got rammed.

#2 What? I'm a ripple in the ocean? I don't want to be a ripple. I want to be a tsunami!

#1 You're missing the point.

Youth #1 is thinking for a moment.

#1 Okay, who was the greatest king in the Old Testament?

#2 David.

#1 What was his occupation?

#2 He was a King.

Attachment: Activity 4 (Continued)

#1 No, no, before he was a king.

#2 You mean as a young man? He was a shepherd.

#1 Right. Now what about Peter? What was his occupation?

#2 A fisherman! What are we doing, playing Bible trivia?

Youth #1 ignores youth #2's last comment.

#1 Hold on, one more. Who was the mother of Jesus?

#2 Mary!

#1 And what was her background?

#2 Well, she was just a teenager at the time of Jesus' birth.

#1 Exactly, she was basically a peasant girl.

#2 What's your point?

#1 What's my point? God uses ordinary people in life to grow his kingdom. Have you heard the saying "God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called"? He uses the people who are there, and equips them with what they need for that time.

#2 How are you ever supposed to know what you're supposed to do with your life?

#1 It's easy—you just do the right thing!

Attachment: Activity 4 (*Continued*)

#2 I think I finally see what you've been getting at.

#1 You're already helping the world. God has already given you the gifts you need for right now.

#2 I guess I was so caught up in wanting to help the world that I didn't realize the world is right here.

Narrator: The lesson learned is that everybody counts!

Attachment: Activity 6

God Is Calling

Leader: He saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea. "Come, follow me," Jesus said. "I will make you fishers of men."

Youth: **They left their nets and followed him.**

Leader: He sees musicians and singers and says, "Follow me, and we will create harmony in the world."

Youth: **We follow him.**

Leader: He sees physicians, nurses, and paramedics and says, "Follow me, and we will care for the sick and injured."

Youth: **We follow him.**

Leader: He sees Habitat for Humanity workers and an architect and says, "Follow me, and we will provide shelter for people in need."

Youth: **We follow him.**

Leader: He sees ministers and worshipers and says, "Follow me, and we will build a community of Christ."

Youth: **We follow him.**

Attachment: Activity 6 (Continued)

Leader: He sees gardeners, farmers, and food vendors and says, "Follow me, and we will offer food for the hungry."

Youth: **We follow him.**

Leader: He sees youth in middle schools and says, "Follow me, and I will teach you my ways."

Youth: **We follow him.**

Attachment: Activity 7

Imagine What's Possible

One: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what has been prepared for those who love God.

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

One: At a time when it's all too convenient to rehearse—and unknowingly reinforce—signs of decline . . . At a moment when God's church is called to reawaken and adapt itself in the midst of radical change . . .

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

One: Through new experiences that stretch us, best practices that teach us, new ideas to inspire us, better tools to equip us, and new patterns of relaxing that can better position us . . .

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

One: By asking us to run toward—not away from—new technologies, new thinking, and changing demographics, God is saying to us . . .

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

One: In the beauty and vastness of our country, where the geography offers breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, new horizons are being put before our eyes . . .

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

Attachment: Activity 7 (Continued)

One: Gathered as God's kingdom on earth, within the church community of youth where good works abound and even dare to begin . . .

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

One: In this land of plenty, youth will sustain God's creation by following our church's mission, challenging the injustices in the world, loving and caring for others, leading by example where those around them will be invited and inspired to dream in discovering new frontiers . . .

All **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

One: At a time when our church needs new eyes and new ears for hearing, a reminder goes forth. We can do things through Christ who strengthens us . . .

All: **Imagine what's possible. God is still speaking.**

Adapted from the United Church of Christ General Synod 28 Theme Litany

Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

It's impossible to talk about Christian tradition without acknowledging its relationship with Judaism. Help the youth appreciate more fully that all monotheistic religions call, nurture, and bless the gifts of their respective worshippers to strengthen God's world. The timeless tradition of love knows no boundaries. Youth may lack a connection between the past and the present tradition of Christianity. This is prime time to involve youth even in worship services. When Jesus says, "Let the children come," he is saying that children and youth belong in the worshipping community. Youth need to be included and welcomed so that they know they belong.

About this Exploration

Faithful Christian practices encourage a communal awareness that God calls, nurtures, and blesses the use of our gifts to strengthen God's work in the world. Our understanding of this partnership with God is always emerging. Traditional gifts, such as preaching, hospitality, music, and caring may be demonstrated in ways recognizable since ancient days. Christian tradition may also be informed and evolve to include modern forms of expression such as social media, video, legislative advocacy, and more. No matter the era or tradition, gifts of ministry are grounded in a desire to minister with and on behalf of Christ.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 49:1-7
Luke 10:38-42

Leader Preparation

Christian tradition can be witnessed in songs of praise and thanksgiving, sound bites welcoming “all the people,” or advocacy for policies that level the playing field for those who are in need. Think about how you will respond when youth question or challenge the traditions of others outside your church. They may wonder why some of their peers respond so differently to the same tradition. As you guide youth through this Exploration, tell them that Christians around the world have the same hopes and dreams for joy to the world.

The Exploring & Engaging activities provide youth the opportunity to reflect on the Holy Spirit through a visual medium, become aware how the famous and the not so famous minister to the needs of others, and realize their gifts can be used during worship services. The Discerning & Deciding activities may help youth clarify what Christian hospitality encompasses, recognize that music works in ways words cannot within a worship service, and realize that there’s always room for God in one’s life. The Sending & Serving activities may provide youth many different names for God among monotheistic religions ascending from Abraham, offer an example of the continuing use of Jewish words in contemporary times through benedictions, and celebrate the reverence for God in Native American culture.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 What’s My Line? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Take time to reflect on all the different ways members of your congregation serve others. The list could no doubt go on and on. Some members will be seen in action each week while others work tirelessly behind the scenes serving God. The purpose of this activity is for youth to discover or be reaffirmed that the ministry of the church is everyone’s job, not just the minister’s. Review and cut apart the names on the copy of the attachment “The Ministry of People.” Add names of people in the local community who model the Christian tradition in the blank spaces. Preview the 1 Timothy 1:5. Think about the people the youth might meet every day doing the work of God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- prepared cards from “Ministry of People,” Attachment: Activity 1

As you greet the youth, invite them to select a name from the prepared cards. Later ask each participant how the person on the card does God’s work. Explain to the group that in early television programming there was a show called “What’s My Line?” A panel of celebrities would ask questions of guests to determine their occupations. Ask the youth what they think about when they hear the word “minister.” Chances are the youth will respond by enumerating the things they see their minister doing most frequently. The answers could sound like baptize babies, perform wedding ceremonies, give sermons, and greet people at the door. Let the youth either describe in words or act out how the person they selected ministers to others.



2 The Spirit of God

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate visually the presence of God. Obtain the artwork “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard. Take time to reflect on the scene, and then display it in the meeting space. Think about what open-ended questions you could ask to guide the conversation about the art work. During the activity, be sure to give the youth adequate “wait time” to process the image.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

As you greet everyone, invite them to take a close-up view of “Sisters in the Wind” by Ethan Hubbard. Tell the youth to carefully scan the whole image. Do not share the title immediately. Probe their thinking using the following questions.

- What’s going on?
- Who do you think these girls might be?
- What would make you think they may be related?
- What evidence is there that it’s windy?
- What makes you think that?

After the youth have offered their analysis, ask them what wind was symbolic of

Prayer: Great Giver of Gifts, please guide me as I invest my time and love of youth for a greater cause connecting the past with the present. Thank you for helping me understand the rich traditions of the Christian church in recalling and living out your Word and welcoming all into your fellowship with song and a caring heart. Your gift of love is more than anyone can imagine. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

in the Bible. Invite someone to read aloud Psalm 139:7–10. Explain that the English word “spirit” translates from the Greek word *pneuma* and also the Hebrew word *ruach*. Both refer to similar meanings of wind in motion or breath. *If you were going to give this work a title, what would it be?* Finally, share the title of the art work.



3 In Worship

Leader preparation: This activity provides youth with practice in exploring and participating more fully in a traditional worship service. Their future level of involvement will depend on their gifts. The range of involvement may vary from familiar roles like candle lighters and choir members to youth being responsible for the call to worship, prayers, or scripture readings. Some youth might even write and lead an entire worship service. Write the titles “Worship: Sights, Sounds, and Feelings” and “Gifts of Youth in Worship Services” on newsprint or a whiteboard. Prepare and review a copy of the attachment “Traditional Worship Service.”

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or whiteboard with the titles “Worship: Sights, Sounds, and Feelings” and “Gifts of Youth in Worship Services”
- “Traditional Worship Service,” Attachment: Activity 3
- an order of service of worship bulletin for your congregation

Tell the youth that a worship service is one place they can be close to God just like members of the early church. A worship service is an opportunity for people gathered together to be in community and in communion with God. Ask what they have seen, heard, and felt during and after a worship service. Record their ideas under the title “Worship: Sights, Sounds, and Feelings.” Tell them that in a recent survey of congregational laity and clergy, worship was described overwhelmingly as an encounter with God that leads to doing God’s work in the world. Invite the youth to find and read Acts 4:31.

Give the group time to think to themselves about the parts in a traditional worship service and then ask them to find a partner and share what they know or at least think they know. Distribute a copy of the attachment “Traditional Worship Service” to each pair of youth so they may review both the parts of a worship service and the purpose or meaning of each part. Ask the group which parts of a worship service were most familiar and the parts were least familiar to them. Distribute copies of your congregation’s worship bulletin for comparison

Using the copy of “Traditional Worship Service,” ask the group what gifts of ministry they might offer to the congregation before, during, and after a traditional worship service. Record the gifts under the title “Gifts of Youth in Worship Services.” If youth seem hesitant to chime in, offer examples, such as offering a prayer, reading the scripture, playing rhythmic instruments during a spiritual, and so forth. Depending on the gifts within the group, suggest that they could assume the roles and responsibilities for an entire worship service.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Mary and Martha (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity provides a snapshot of one custom in the early church—followers of Jesus meeting in each other’s homes. As you read Luke 19:38–42, imagine yourself as one of the characters. Although Mary is

enthralled listening to Jesus' every word while seated at his feet, Martha seems to be on overload making preparations for her guest. The words of Jesus that "Mary chose the better part" have often been misinterpreted by many to mean the spiritual life is superior to the secular world. In the context of God's hospitality, however, we are required to transform our relationships with the people around us so that fairness is maintained and discrimination and any form of an elitist relationship is abolished.

Supplies:

- Bible

Randomly solicit ideas from the participants about what happens at their house when they know company is coming. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 10:38–42. Ask the group the following questions.

- With whom do you identify? Why?
- What prevents you from sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him?
- What would it feel like to have the opportunity and support to do just that?
- How would you balance the "Mary and Martha" in you as you seek to decide your ministry to others?

Either read the scripture one more time or move directly to youth role-playing this scripture passage.

5 You Shall Have a Song

Leader preparation: The ministry of music as a gift harkens back to the early church as shown in both in the Old and New Testaments. The book of Psalms in particular is a collection of sacred verses sung in both the Jewish and Christian tradition. This activity provides youth a chance to recognize that music and their musical gifts offer glory to God.

Write the title "Musical Gifts" on newsprint or a whiteboard. Add the following categories under the title: vocalists, string players, brass players, woodwind players, percussionists, and keyboardists. Prepare and preview the lyrics of "You Shall Have a Song." Obtain and listen to a musical recording of "You Shall Have a Song" (Tune: Ziegenhals).

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or whiteboard titled "Musical Gifts"
- marker
- song: "You Shall Have a Song" by Harriet Ilse Ziegenhals (tune: Ziegenhals); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSoPcCPRpJE>; lyrics, <http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/C5358.pdf>
- highlighter for each pair of youth
- music player

Music plays a significant part in the ministry of gifts involving tradition. The Bible contains many references to music. Invite half the group to look up 2 Samuel 6:15 and the other half to find Psalm 95:2. Ask a volunteer from each group to read the scripture aloud. Under the title "Musical Gifts" write the names of the youth in the respective categories. Survey the musical gifts among the youth by calling out descriptors such as vocalists, string players, brass players, woodwind players, percussionists, and keyboardists. Reassure the youth that they need not have mastered their gift of music to respond. If some youth have not been included, ask those individuals what they would like to do musically.

Have the youth get into pairs and distribute a copy of “You Shall Have a Song” lyrics to each pair. This song is based on Isaiah 30: 29 and Psalm 100. Invite them to read the lyrics and highlight the most important words for them. Sample some of their highlighted words.

Play the musical recording of “You Shall Have a Song,” and invite the youth to sing along. Ask the youth to review the lyrics and decide what body movements they could add to the song. Engage the youth in a group discussion leading to a consensus on desired movements. Tell them to concentrate on doing the movements as they listen to the song again.

Want Ads

Leader preparation: This activity targets the tradition that everyone regardless of occupation serves God. Gather multiple copies of newspapers with the Want Ads section. Obtain a recording of “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (tune: I’m Gonna Live), or invite an accompanist.

Supplies:

- hymn: “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (African American spiritual (tune: I’m Gonna Live), http://www.hymnary.org/text/im_gonna_live_so_god_can_use_me?tab=about)
- music player or an accompanist
- newspaper Want Ads for each pair of youth

Ask the group what Jesus’ occupation was. Some youth may be surprised to learn that he was a rabbi or teacher. Distribute hymnals or copies of “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” lyrics to everyone, and invite the group to sing this African American spiritual.

Divide the group into pairs and ask them to find jobs in the “want ads” that interest them. Sample some of their choices. Ask what criteria they used for their job picks. Ask whether their choice of occupation prevents them from serving God. Why or why not? Ask what gifts of ministry would always be welcomed in the work place. Reinforce the conclusion that everyone can serve God regardless of occupation.

Sending & Serving Activities



Many Traditions, One God (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to draw attention to the variety of names given to God among different cultures. Review the copy of the attachment “Names of God.” Write the prayer following prayer on newsprint or a whiteboard.

- O, Yahweh, we call upon You in Your name:
- O, God,
- O, Allah.
- O, Great Spirit,
- O, Most Compassionate,
- O, Most Generous,
- O Greatest,
- O All-Knowing,

O Wise.
Praise be to You, there is no god but You.
Amen.

Supplies:

- prepared newsprint with prayer
- “Names of God,” Attachment: Activity 7

Tell the group that there are a number of ways God is referred to in prayer around the world. Distribute the attachment. Refer to the prayer you displayed. Let youth tell what they already know about each name. Provide additional background information as needed. Invite the youth to rest in the presence of God as this prayer representing different religious traditions is shared. Cluster the youth into mini-groups and assign each to say aloud one line in the posted prayer. Ask that everyone join together in saying *Praise be to You, there is no God but You. Amen.*



8 Peace Be With You

Leader preparation: This activity provides youth with a better understanding of the tradition of a benediction through the gift of scripture and song. The word “benediction” comes from the Latin, *bene* meaning “well” and *dicere* meaning “to speak.” In short, a benediction is a short invocation for divine help, blessing, and guidance, usually given at the end of worship. There are many different ways to extend God’s gift of blessing his people. Make a copy of the attachment “Benedictions from Scripture.” Cut apart the benedictions, and put them in a container.

Another form of a benediction can be through the gift of music. Obtain and listen to a music recording of “Shalom, My Friends,” an Israeli folk melody. Post the lyrics on newsprint or a whiteboard:

Shalom, my friends, Shalom, my friends,
my friends, shalom, shalom
Shalom, my friends, shalom, my friends.
Shalom, shalom.

Supplies:

- “Benedictions from Scripture,” Attachment: Activity 8
- container
- song: “Shalom, My Friends,” traditional Hebrew blessing (tune: Israeli melody), http://www.hymnary.org/text/shalom_my_friends_shalom
- music player

Ask the youth how they would explain a “benediction” and where it occurs in a worship service. Depending on the responses, expand their understanding as necessary. Tell the group that a number of benedictions come directly from scripture. Inform them that probably the one most familiar to them may be from Numbers 6: 24–26, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.” Invite the youth to select an example of other benedictions from a container of prepared benedictions from the handout “Benedictions from Scripture.” If the group is larger than the number of examples, invite the youth to find a partner or form groups of three. Select each youth or small group to read the benediction silently and then aloud when called upon.

Point out that in several examples, the benediction ends with the word “Amen.” Ask the group what the meaning of the word is. If necessary, tell them the word is used in both the Old and New Testaments. Explain that it means “so be it.”

A benediction does not have to be read aloud. Another way of conveying a benediction is through music. Introduce the song “Shalom, My Friends,” an Israeli folk melody. The word “shalom” is from the Jewish tradition, meaning “wholeness, health, justice, and peace.” Moreover, a “shalom person” is what the Bible means by a new person in Christ. A “shalom” society is what is envisioned by the rule of God bringing justice and righteousness.

Invite the youth to sing the song either with or without the recording. If your gift of music allows, divide the group in half and sing the song as a round.

Reflect

Think back to your own faith journey. What traditions meant the most to you? What traditions would you like to reintroduce into your church community? What new ways of worship have been hard for you to accept? Based on the comments from youth, what are some possible changes in your church that you anticipate may become a reality in the not too distant future?



9 The Four Directions

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is for youth to participate in one specific tradition, perhaps different than their own. Many traditions among different cultures bring a unique relationship to God. Prepare a copy of the attachment “Litany of the Four Directions” as representative of Native American culture in communicating with the Great Spirit.

Supplies:

- “Litany of the Four Directions,” Attachment: Activity 9
- hand drum(s)

Invite the youth to participate in a Native American prayer. Explain in order to do the prayer properly that everyone needs to be oriented in the right direction. Ask the youth to stand and face East, South, West, and North. Distribute copies of “Litany of the Four Directions.” Assign six different people to assume the role of leader and several other youth the drummers for the litany. Ask that all youth join together in the group responses. Invite the youth to be in the presence of God to pray.

Attachment: Activity 1

Ministry of People	
Nelson Mandela	environmentalist
social worker	Barack Obama
Nobel Prize Winner	medical researcher
children	Bono
George Clooney	judges and lawyers
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Standing Bear
Yo Yo Ma	authors
bus drivers	athletes
Economists	housing administrators
Taylor Swift	Missionaries

Attachment: Activity 3

Traditional Worship Service

Prelude	The music played before the worship service
Call to Worship	A welcoming message that may include scripture
Hymn	A song of praise, adoration, or prayer to God
Gathering Prayer	A collective prayer to open minds, hearts, and lives to God
Good News Response	A collective response to the good news
Word of Welcome	Invitation to the congregation to welcome the good news
Scripture	Sacred readings from the Bible
Sermon	A message from a minister or laity based on a passage of scripture for the purpose of religious instruction or inspiration
Offertory	The time of collection of offerings of money and ourselves
Doxology	A blessing of the offerings
Prayer	A time for speaking, listening, and responding to God
Benediction	A short invocation for divine help, bless
Postlude or Closing	The music played after the worship service

Attachment: Activity 7

Names of God

Alpha	Jesus	Omega
Almighty God	Jesus Christ	Prince of Peace
Anointed One	King Eternal	Redeemer
Bread of Life	King of Glory	Resurrection
Christ	King of Kings	Reverend
Christ Jesus	Lamb of God	Savior
Comforter	Lord	Shepherd
Emmanuel	Lord Almighty	Spirit
Everlasting Father	Lord Christ	Son
God Almighty	Lord God Almighty	Son of God
God, My Savior	Lord of Glory	Son of Man
Great Shepherd	Lord of Hosts	The Highest
Holy	Lord of Lords	The Life
Holy Ghost	Lord Jesus Christ	The Truth
Holy One	Mediator	Wonderful
Holy Spirit	Messiah	Word of God
Invisible	Mighty God	Vine
Jehovah	Mighty One	

Attachment: Activity 8

Benedictions from Scripture

Psalm 89: 52

Praise be to the Lord forever! Amen and Amen.

Psalm 29: 11

The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. Amen.

Psalm 121:7–8

The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Amen.

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Ephesians 6:23–24

Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. Amen.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Philippians 4:19–20

God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1Thessalonians 3:11–13

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. Amen.

Attachment: Activity 9

Litany of the Four Directions

Leader 1: Creator, God, as relatives of the community we are brought together to celebrate our lives in your love.

Group: Let us remember all of our relatives, past and present, winged and four-legged.

Four drumbeats

Leader 2: As we face the East, it is the time of beginnings.
With the rising sun, the birth of a child,
the start of the week we begin anew.
With the springtime comes the blossoming of the plants and the birth
of the animals, as we celebrate the emerging patterns of life.
We hear the drumbeat; the heart beat of Mother Earth.

Group: We give thanks for our birth, this time of exploration and creation.

Four drumbeats

Leader 3: As we face the South, we celebrate and acknowledge our emotion.
We recognize the strengths and struggles of our youth.
Help us share our laughter, love and joy as we walk through the day
in our world of diversity.
In this time of growing, we hear the drumbeat.

Attachment: Activity 9 (Continued)

Group: We give thanks for the gifts of tenderness, kindness and understanding for these draws us closer to each other and our creator.

Four drumbeats

Leader 4: As we face the West, we celebrate spirit.
This is the time of reflection and of stillness for our ultimate growth.
Bringing together the patterns of life and our emotions with the spirit,
we are lead to a greater faith.
As we reap the harvest, we hear the drumbeat.

Group: As the sun moves along its path in the sky
we bring closure to those who have walked on.
We remember and reflect on the experiences of the day,
We give thanks for this time of reflection and of remembrance.

Four drumbeats

Leader 5: In facing the North, we celebrate the life of our elders.
For the gifts of insight and wisdom that
God has revealed to them our of their past
which are so vital to us in our present.
In the evening, as we gather at home to listen to the stories,
we hear the drumbeat.

Group: As we listen and share, we build respect for each other.
We give thanks for the strengths of community.

Attachment: Activity 9 (Continued)

Four drumbeats

Leader 6: As we continue the circles of Life,
we are united in the love of the creator, God.
As we look downward to Mother Earth, we are reminded
of the unlimited gift of her care.
As we look upward to Father Sky, we are reminded
of the unlimited gift of his grace.

Group: We listen for the drumbeat and are reminded
that as we move through our lives we impact all around us.
We are reminded of our responsibility to nurture those around us,
as we are nurtured through creation.
We give thanks to our God who provides the gifts given to us
from the four directions, Mother Earth and Father Sky.

Four drumbeats

“Litany of the Four Directions” was adapted by the Rev. Marlene White Rabbit-Helgemo, Pastor of the All Nations Indian Church of Minneapolis, MN, from a traditional American Indian form of prayer.

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Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

For some youth the concept of mission may mean only a local shelter for the homeless, a food pantry, or a free health clinic. They may overlook that it's people serving people that's really the essence of "mission" regardless of the scale or location of the interaction. Since youth are natural idealists and activists, mission work is a great fit for them. They need to unwrap their gifts of ministry. It might be easy for some of them to lose touch with the Spirit that inspires their sense of mission—the Spirit that makes mission not just an obligation that they can't get out of, but a source of meaning and purpose. Since youth may think that mission work requires an earth-shaking endeavor or an exceptional gift to be valued, emphasize that everyone is called to offer their gifts.

About this Exploration

Each of us is like a "letter from Christ," as Paul says, sent to bring hope and healing wherever there is need. In all contexts, there are opportunities for us to share our gifts of ministry in a variety of ways, be it at home, at school, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and at church. Over our lifetimes, the diversity of our gifts can emerge and grow, and may change, as we move into new places and spaces in our lives. Trusting that God can work through us right where we are is an exciting way to realize that the Holy Spirit is all around us.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Nehemiah 2:11-20
2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Leader Preparation

Reflect on the ways you have used your gifts of ministry for hope and healing. Although the range of possibilities and the level of commitment probably has varied, you know you were always using them in the presence of and with God's help. Reassure youth that a good place to start their mission work can be doing random acts of kindness—a welcoming smile, a pat on the back, or a bravo! Be ready to help youth experience the joy and satisfaction of serving others.

The Exploring & Engaging activities may engage youth in finding artifacts of the church's commitment to mission work, recognizing the gifts of service among the famous and not so famous, and celebrating the start of the church's mission at Pentecost. The Discerning & Deciding activities may provide youth an image of Christ in mission work, an appreciation for the efforts of both the early church and the church of today in reaching out to others, and an understanding that carrying out "mission" requires both physical and spiritual energy. The Sending & Serving activities describe mission in a very concrete way, activate and inspire youth's drive to serve others, and acknowledge that courage may be needed in the mission field.

Prayer: *O Holy One, thank you for showing me what is important in this world. In Jesus Christ alone, and through the power of the Holy Spirit alone, you have empow-*

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Archeological Finds (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is designed to give youth an opportunity to explore some church artifacts to find out what the church's mission really is. In advance, enlist the help of church members and staff to gather church "artifacts," such as old newsletters, bulletins, annual reports, photographs, committee reports, newspaper articles and so forth. Invite members of the congregation willing to be interviewed by young people about the work of the church both near and far. Invite one guest for each group of three to five youth. The goal is to have an assortment of different things for youth to dig in and look for clues of the church's mission work. Place the "artifacts" in a large box or basket. Prepare a copy of the attachment "Digging for Mission Evidence" for each group.

Supplies:

- collection of church "artifacts"
- large box or basket
- "Digging for Mission Evidence," Attachment: Activity 1
- pencil for each group
- invited guests, one person for each group of three to five youth

As you greet the youth, ask what they think the mission or purpose of the church is. Be open to all their thoughts, and then explain that in the early church Jesus told his disciples what it was they were to do. Explain that the church of today continues to follow Christ's example. Invite the youth to imagine themselves in the role of archeologists looking for clues of their church's mission. Urge them to think about what gifts of ministry were needed to carry out the mission.

Divide the youth into groups of three to five members. Tell them that each group may send one missionary to the excavation site to select one artifact and invite a church member to join them. Explain that the church member is their resident "expert" and may have insights on these artifacts as well as other stories. The church member will remain a part of their archeological teams assisting the group in uncovering information. After researching the artifact, another missionary must return it to the dig and return with another artifact and so forth. Each group must then survey the artifact or process the information gained through an interview of a member of the congregation. Each group must record its findings on a copy of the handout "Digging for Mission Evidence." When the excavation ends, provide the groups some time to process using the following questions.

- What artifact(s) were the most revealing about the church's mission?
- What piece of evidence surprised the groups the most?
- What were the opportunities for youth to participate in the church's outreach?
- Where would the groups recommend greater youth involvement?
- What did the groups learn by interviewing some members of the congregation?

2 Mission Possible

Leader preparation: Teamwork is not only an important life skill, but is particularly important in mission work. Although the youth certainly understand what cooperation means, they may not always demonstrate it. The purpose of this

ered me to love youth, to teach them the power of your living Word, and to work for wholeness in our lives in your name. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

activity is for youth to experience it and then do a self-assessment of their skills. The Supplies list represents what each group of 3 to 5 people will need to accomplish the task, so prepare accordingly. Put the required materials in a baggie for each group. Determine the composition of each group in advance.

Supplies:

- 50 paper drinking straws for each group
- 75 straight pins for each group
- baggie for each group
- (optional) magnet to keep track of pins for each group
- yardstick or tape measure

When the youth arrive, ask what they think it would take to replicate the Eiffel Tower. After listening to some of their ideas, which are likely to be fairly concrete in nature, introduce the idea of cooperation among the people working on the project as a requirement, too. To sharpen their cooperative abilities, tell them that each assigned group will be responsible for building a freestanding tower with straws and pins.

Be sure to establish the ground rule that each group must remain in its assigned space and no additional materials beyond what’s in the baggie may be used. When the allotted time has elapsed, measure the towers and discuss the different construction and problem-solving methods used. Ask the youth what gift(s) each participant contributed to the group’s work.



③ Fifty Days after Easter

Leader preparation: Through the course of a year, the story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the Christian church are reflected in the seasons in the church calendar. In the spirit of mission, Pentecost is the focus of this activity. The youth may not instantly recall this special time compared to Christmas and Easter, but it is just as significant in the life of the church. Obtain and display the artwork “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel” in front of the meeting space. The original artwork can be found in a manuscript completed in A.D. 586. The Spirit of the Living God is depicted by a dove descending from the heavens and entering earthly realms to rest over Mary who is speaking to the apostles. The trees above the arch are said to symbolize the garden of paradise. Fire, another symbol of the Spirit, overshadows the apostles. Read and reflect on Acts 2:1–4. Have a birthday cake in plain sight when the youth arrive.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel” (Anonymous), https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- marker
- birthday cake
- paper plates
- forks

As the youth arrive and see the birthday cake, tell them that they will be celebrating a birthday today. Draw their attention to “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel.” Engage the group in conversation using the following questions.

- What does the poster represent in Christian church history?
- What special time during the church year might the poster be representative of?

- What do you think are the significance of the chosen colors and the appearance of fire?
- What clues do you get from the title, “Pentecost from the Rabbula Gospel”? (Explain that the Rabbula Gospel is one of the earliest illuminated, or illustrated, Gospel manuscripts. It is from the sixth century and was signed by the man who was its scribe, Rabbula.)
- How is Pentecost celebrated in the church now?

Explain that the Spirit of the Living God is depicted by the dove descending from the heavens and entering earthly realms to rest over Mary who is speaking to the apostles. Tell the group that the trees above the arch are said to symbolize the garden of paradise. Fire, another symbol of the Spirit, overshadows the apostles. Finally, let the group know this artwork represents the birth of the church or the season of Pentecost in the church year.

Ask for a volunteer to read Acts 2:1–4 to the group. Give them enough time to both read and process the information. Ask them how they would explain what was conveyed in the passage. Ask them to summarize what determines whether or not there is a church. Point out that the disciples, a motley crew to be sure, encountered a loving living God. They received the message “Peace be with them. There is forgiveness if they want it.” Tell them that the Sundays following Pentecost are identified by number and focus on the story of the church in mission. Again mention that Pentecost itself is recognized as the church’s birth and enjoy birthday cake as a celebration of that event.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Mirror Image (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is for youth to determine how Christ’s work continues in today’s world. Preview and make a copy of the attachment “Christ Has No Body” for each person. Teresa of Avila lived in Spain in the days of Martin Luther. She decided to become a nun at eighteen but waited until age twenty to join the local convent. Her most famous book is an autobiographical account of her life called the *Interior Castle*. The prayer “Christ Has No Body” is one of her most famous.

Supplies:

- “Christ Has No Body,” Attachment: Activity 4

Distribute a copy of “Christ Has No Body” to each person. Allow youth time to reflect on the message. Ask the following questions:

- Why do they think this particular prayer was chosen for this faith practice?
- What does the prayer say about their role or purpose in life?
- What gifts of ministry can be offered through our hands, feet, and eyes?
- Would you agree with the following statement? “When people look at us, they’re getting a glimpse of Christ.” Why or why not?

5 Then and Now

Leader preparation: The church has always understood itself to be an extension of Jesus’ ministry. The *diakonia* of the early church—the ministry of healing, service, care, compassion and hospitality—served the needy neighbor. Today social services and social action are seen as integral and complementary forms of ministry. Church-related social action and policy cover a wide range of contemporary

issues, including urban life, poverty, housing, health care, family life, women's issues, child care, aging, hospice, racial and ethnic concerns, the needs of persons with disabilities, peace, refugees, and immigration. Preview the video "Taking Root The Vision of Wangari Maathai." Go to the video "Connecting Threads: Partners in Mission" to preview some stories of missionaries in the field. Check out the website "Maps of the World" to identify the locations of mission sites. Take time to reflect on the dimension of mission work spear headed by your church locally and internationally.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- digital projector
- website: "Maps of the World" <http://www.mapsofworld.com/>
- (optional) video: "Taking Root The Vision of Wangari Maathai," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5GX6JktJZg>
- video: "Connecting Threads: Partners in Mission," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLyaWukav4Q>

Ask the group what picture pops into their minds when they hear the word "missionary." Tell them they won't find the word "missionary" in the Bible, but they would find the word "apostle," which means "the one who is sent." Therefore, as followers of Christ they are sent by him to do his work. Ask for any examples of mission work in the United States or abroad identified by location and the service provided. If some geography is desired, ask the youth to pinpoint the locations on the website "Maps of the World." Ask the youth to recall any special projects carried out by famous missionaries. Mother Teresa and Albert Schweitzer would be two examples from the past. A more contemporary example is Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmentalist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient who founded a grassroots organization that empowers African women to improve their lives and conserve the environment through planting trees. Show the video "Taking Root The Vision of Wangari Maathai," if desired.

The United Church of Christ in partnership with other denominations through "One Great Hour of Sharing" carries God's message of love and support to more than 80 countries. Together they target resources for the following:

- clean water and food
- education and health care
- small business micro-credit
- disaster relief
- refugees
- displaced persons

To provide current images and messages from missionaries, go to the video "Connecting Threads: Partners in Mission" and share several stories from missionaries in the field. Remind everyone that there are at least two ways to do mission work: prayer and hands-on experiences, and prayer and financial support for those in need. Everyone can contribute to the mission of the church.



6 Go Go Missionaries

Leader preparation: Keep in mind that youth are typically ambitious and think they are invincible. What better time of life for them to "attack" areas in the community that need shoring up or an all out overhaul. The purpose of this activity is to let the youth know that each of them have the skills to be "Power Missionaries" in their school, home, church, and community. Make copies of the attachment "Go Go Missionaries" for each person.

Supplies:

- song: “Go Go Power Rangers,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uw3ON0ipQHs>
- “Go Go Missionaries,” Attachment: Activity 6

Everyone who follows Jesus is really on a mission. Suggest missionaries are physically, mentally, and spiritually on the move throughout the world. In some ways missionaries are like “Power Rangers.” Ask the group for any information they may have already about “Power Rangers.” Listen to the song “Go Go Power Rangers” on the video, and distribute the handout “Go Go Missionaries.” Divide the youth into small groups of three to five members. Challenge each group to create a “Go Go Missionaries” theme song. Tell them they’ll have to choose their words carefully to accurately reflect the role of a missionary. Remind them that their word choices will need to correspond as much as possible to the number of syllables in the original lyrics, but reassure them that no one will be counting. Specify a limited period of time for small group work. Reassemble the youth, and invite each group to share their new song.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Reality Check (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This sending activity allows youth to envision their role as Christians in ministering to the needs of others. Make a copy of the attachment “A Buddhist Writing,” and cut apart each line.

Supplies:

- “A Buddhist Writing,” Attachment: Activity 7

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, authored the reading that will be shared. Ask the youth what religious tradition a Dalai Lama represents. If there is uncertainty, inform the group that the Dalai Lama is the leader of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Either pair the youth, or invite them to find a partner independently. Distribute only one line of the prepared strips from “A Buddhist Writing” to each pair of youth and tell them to read it. Tell the partners that they will have a few moments to decide which one will be the reader while the other demonstrates a creative movement to add a visual dimension to the thought. Invite the partners to discuss and agree on a creative movement that would complement the thought. Order the pairs according to the numbers on the strips, and let the activity commence.

Ask the youth to recall all the nouns in the writing that could describe a missionary, such as protector, guide, ship, sanctuary, lamp, a place of refuge, and servant. Challenge the youth to provide a contemporary example of each of these images. The images represent gifts of ministry for those in mission work at home and far away. The work of a missionary is never done. There is no finish line.



8 Vision after the Sermon

Leader preparation: Obtain, study, and display “Vision after the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin. Think about where and when the will of God is in control. Youth might be asked to do the same. This oil painting, completed in 1888 by the French artist Paul Gauguin, has had many names. The artist called it first “Apparition,” and then later these titles were used: “Women in Prayer,” “Struggle between Angels,” “Jacob Wrestling with the Angel,” and “The Struggle of Jacob

and the Angel.” It was the first in a series of religious paintings. The artist’s style in this painting lends itself to tremendous freedom for interpretation. This activity offers youth a chance to interpret the painting for themselves and reflect on what happens to them or what might happen to them after a sermon.

Supplies:

- artwork: “Vision after the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1102072326?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401

Invite the youth to take a careful look at the painting “Vision after the Sermon” by Paul Gauguin. Let the youth wrestle with the painting’s message before offering that over time it has had several different titles. The artist called it “Apparition.” Ask the group what is meant by the word apparition. Explain, if necessary, that it’s an appearance of something ghost-like, remarkable, or unexpected. Explain that other titles were later given to the work such as “Women in Prayer,” “Struggle between Angels,” “Jacob Wrestling with the Angel,” and “The Struggle of Jacob and the Angel.” Ask the youth when they may have “struggled” or “wrestled” with an idea or expectation delivered in a sermon. Ask when their faith may have been challenged. Just like a painting speaks to and leaves an impression on a viewer, a sermon spreads the “good news” to inspire a congregation to be Christ-like during the week at home, school, and in the community. Everyone is a missionary each time they interact someone else. Close with the following prayer, or one like it.

Almighty God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, inspire and protect these young people on their mission of living and loving like Christ. Bless their efforts to demonstrate your love and open their hearts to receive the Good News of Christ from those they serve. Go with this prayer and return to strengthen the vision and hope of the church. Amen.

Reflect

Visualize in what way(s) the youth are likely to make a difference on this earth today and in the future. Do they have at least a tentative road map to bring hope, healing, and the love of God to others? Do they know where to go if they lose their way? What gifts of ministry have they discovered in answer to God’s call to serve others?

9 God’s Call

Leader preparation: The act of giving ourselves over to God takes courage. The litany on the attachment lifts up the image of having courage to trust God individually and in community as youth go forward into the “midst” of the unknown to answer God’s call. Make a copy of “Stepping with Courage into the Mist of God’s Call” for each person.

Supplies:

- “Stepping with Courage into the Mist of God’s Call,” Attachment: Activity 9

It takes courage to do the work of God. Sometimes the path may not be clearly marked or even out of focus as if walking through a mist or fog. Explain that sometimes the decisions and actions taken will not be popular. Doing the right thing, however, is always the way of Jesus. Distribute a copies of “Stepping with Courage into the Mist of God’s Call,” and invite the youth to join in on the responses. Invite a youth to take on the role of leader.

Attachment: Activity 1

Digging for Mission Evidence

Artifact	Description of Evidence	Gifts Required
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		

Attachment: Activity 4

Christ Has No Body

A prayer written by Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

Christ has no body now but yours.

No hands but yours,

No feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes through which Christ's

Compassion is to look out to the earth.

Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good.

Yours are the hands which He blesses the world.

Yours are the hands,

Yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes,

You are His body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Attachment: Activity 6

Go Go Missionaries

They've got

They've got

No one will ever take them down
The power lies on their side

Go Go Missionaries
Go Go Missionaries
Go Go Missionaries

They know

No one will ever take them down
The power lies on their side

Go Go Missionaries
Go Go Missionaries
Go Go Missionaries

A Buddhist Writing

by Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

1. May I become at all times, both now and forever,
2. A protector for those without protection,
3. A guide for those who have lost their way,
4. A ship for those with oceans to cross,
5. A sanctuary for those in danger,
6. A lamp for those without light,
7. A place of refuge for those who lack shelter,
8. And a servant to all in need.

Attachment: Activity 9

Stepping with Courage into the Mist of God's Call

A Litany

One: Let us join together in prayer for God's sustaining love, prophetic voice, and holy wisdom on the journey.

All: **O God, carry us into the mist with courage.**

One: Guide youth—the future ministry leaders of our church.

All: **O God, carry us into the mist with courage.**

One: Build their wings as they respond to your holy call, stepping out from the known landscapes into the mist of the unknown, and sometimes uncharted.

All: **May they find you in all with whom they serve.**

One: O God, carry them into the mist with courage.

All: **Carry our church and world, our youth, teachers, laity and clergy alike as we each consider risking a "yes" to your call.**

One: O God, carry us into the mist with courage.

All: **O God, carry us all into the mist with courage.**

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Discovering Gifts of Ministry



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Youth encounter many transitions—emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually. They might think that declaring themselves a Christian is a onetime thing rather than a life-long commitment in striving to be more Christ-like. It requires staying in good condition spiritually. Youth are at a crossroads in their lives where everything and everyone around them is changing. This is when they need time as if placed in a “holding pattern” to explore, discern, and serve in their faith community. Youth need to feel valued and useful as their gifts of ministry mature. They need to see themselves as life-long learners both in the secular world and more importantly in their faith community.

About this Exploration

We are not who we once were. We adapt and change along with the shifting circumstances we experience. Gifts of ministry develop throughout the duration of our lives. Our gifts are revealed, acquired, and developed as we encounter the present and are led toward expanding hope for the future. When we engage our gifts of ministry we join with God in making that hope reality, and we become the people God calls us to be.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
1 Samuel 2:1-10, 11- 20
Philippians 4:1- 13

Leader Preparation

Think about how you will encourage youth to become more aware of their faith and ownership of their role as a servant of God. Sharing your personal experience on how you have adapted your gifts of ministry through the years can be a valuable lesson for youth. In writing to the Philippians Paul told them to hold firm to all that is true and honorable and just and pure—pleasing, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy—for in these things, he says, we shall find the peace of God—the peace that surpasses all understanding—that keeps us safe in Christ Jesus. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

The Exploring & Engaging activities give youth a view of new gifts of ministry and an experience with the spirit of love through compassion and song. The Discerning & Deciding activities give youth a chance to check their own level of spirituality, recognize the hazards of labeling people, and find their passion in helping others. The Sending & Serving activities may help to prepare youth for service to God, realize there’s more work to do in God’s world, and know that the ministry of gifts may involve some risky challenges.

Prayer: God, let my days be filled with your vision of the world now and into the future. Let me be open to your prompting in discerning your plan for me, let my actions speak volumes to those around me, and let me reflect on the views and feelings of oth-

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Crystal Ball (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: At this age most youth feel somewhat uncertain about their future. They may have some inkling, however, as to the direction they may be taking. This activity may begin their process of exploring their gifts of ministry for the future. Prepare a copy of the attachment “Crystal Ball” for each person. Write the following quotation from Harriet Tubman on newsprint or a whiteboard:

Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

—Harriet Tubman

Supplies:

- colored pencils
- fine-point colored markers
- “Crystal Ball,” Attachment: Activity 1
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with Harriet Tubman quotation

As you greet the youth, ask them what they think about when they hear the phrase “crystal ball.” Affirm that their ideas of a fortune teller, predicting, or forecasting the future are spot on. None of us can know absolutely what our future will hold, but we can make our own predictions. What is certain is that as a child of God we will change and see more clearly how our gifts of ministry can be best used. Display the quotation from Harriet Tubman and invite the youth’s reaction. Make sure they know who Harriet Tubman was.

Distribute copies of the handout “Crystal Ball,” along with pencils and/or markers. Ask the group what stirs them or what they’re genetically encoded to do. Invite them to respond to the questions on their crystal ball. After completing the task, let the group forecast one another’s future. Do the activity along with the group and share what your crystal ball shows. Let each person share his or her own crystal ball.



2 The Golden Rule and Labels

Leader preparation: As youth acquire and develop their gifts, The Golden Rule will always be applicable throughout their journey. Reflect on the ministry of gifts and how people have had to slow down or speed up to be responsive to those around them. This activity gives youth a chance to revisit the impact of The Golden Rule as they interact with one another. Cut apart the attachment “Labeling People” to make a label for each youth in the group. Display The Golden Rule along with the citation for Matthew 7:12 on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with the heading “The Golden Rule”
- “Labeling People,” Attachment: Activity 2
- tape

As you greet the youth, ask them what they know about The Golden Rule. If they can’t recall anything, have them look up Matthew 7:12. The significance of the verse will be huge in their futures. Ask them to offer examples of what The

ers as I think about what I've accomplished with your help and what still needs to be done. Bless the youth as they venture out each in their own way to make your world reflect the life of Christ. Amen.

Session Development

For each session, leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Golden Rule would look and sound like as you record their ideas on the prepared newsprint or whiteboard.

Use that attachment “Labeling People” to make a label to tape on each person in a spot where that person cannot see it but others can. Ask the youth to walk around and talk with as many other people as possible. Direct them to respond to the labels, not the people. Assign a topic for them to discuss while mingling such as plans for the next youth retreat or winter break and so forth. After five minutes or less, stop the conversations and discuss the following questions:

- How did you feel during the conversations?
- What happened to you when others responded just to the label? How did you feel?
- How did this activity interfere in living out The Golden Rule?
- What did this activity tell you about labeling people?

Emphasize that The Golden Rule knows no labels.



3 One Spirit of Love

Leader preparation: Put the lyrics of “One Spirit of Love” on the upper half of a sheet of newsprint and the following quotation on the lower half of the same sheet of newsprint:

A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Cut one small strip of newsprint for each person. Prepare a copy of the lyrics to “One Spirit of Love” for each person. Preview the music recording, and practice stopping the music at the end of each stanza.

Supplies:

- prepared sheet of newsprint
- small strips of paper for each person
- marker for each person
- tape
- song: “One Spirit of Love” by Paul B. Svenson (©1987/2011 Dad’s Songbook Music LLC. All rights reserved. Used by permission, www.dadsongbook.com); video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBg80JaNIIM>
- “One Spirit of Love,” Attachment: Activity 3
- music player

When the youth arrive, ask them to think about the words to “One Spirit of Love” that you posted. Invite each person to write only one word on a strip of paper that the phrase brings to mind. Tell them to tape their words under the title. Probe their thinking about their word choices.

Distribute the song lyrics for “One Spirit of Love,” and ask the group to read them. Tell the youth that you will play a music recording of “One Spirit of Love,” and there will be a pause after each stanza to give them a chance to paraphrase the lyrics. Caution them not to add or subtract from the message. Repeat this paraphrasing process for each stanza. Replay the entire song, and invite them to sing along this time. Focus on the quotation from Gandhi, and ask the youth if they think the song and the quote complement each other. Why or why not?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Spiritual Check-Up (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate that youth have responsibility for keeping themselves spiritually fit. Preview the activity description and think about how you might facilitate this checkup. Prepare a copy of the attachment “Spiritual Checkup” for each person.

Supplies:

- “Spiritual Checkup,” Attachment: Activity 4

Ask the youth if they have had any first aid or CPR training. Comment on the responses to the query. Tell them rather than making a physical evaluation of their needs, they will be giving themselves a spiritual checkup.

From a physical perspective there is a recommended schedule for special examinations and inoculations. For example, in many states a physical is required before entering middle school. A spiritual checkup, though, is something that needs to be self-initiated whenever necessary throughout life. Ask for some examples of when a spiritual checkup might be recommended. If the group is stumped on how to respond, offer these examples: after a dramatic change in a family such as when someone leaves for college or when someone dies would be times for a checkup.

Spiritual checkups will be accomplished through small group spiritual examinations. Divide the youth into groups of two or three and distribute a copy of “Spiritual Checkup” to each person. Monitor the group work, but try not to interfere with the conversations. This may be an activity that is best left to the youth alone. When the groups reassemble, ask how the examination made them feel.



5 The Road Not Taken

Leader preparation: The focus here is on the fact that young people have a myriad of choices to make. Some choices come easily, some not. Read and reflect on Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” and how it relates to the future vision of youth. Go to the video “The Road Not Taken” to hear the poem read aloud. Prepare a copy of “The Road Not Taken” for each person, and then spread out a variety of maps in the meeting space.

Supplies:

- variety of maps
- computer and Internet access
- digital projector
- video: “The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spXtePd4Whk>
- “The Road Not Taken,” Attachment: Activity 5

Ask the youth to start perusing the maps. Tell them they will not be required to read maps, but they will be doing some traveling. Ask for a show of hands to indicate their familiarity with the poet Robert Frost. Go to video “The Road Not Taken,” and invite the group to listen to Frost’s poem. Distribute copies of the handout “The Road Not Taken,” and ask the youth to read the poem silently. Ask what they think the title means.

Ask if the poet is speaking in the past, present, or future. Ask what situation the speaker is facing, and inquire if they have ever found themselves in a similar

situation. Give everyone a chance to offer examples of some roads most of them have traveled. Conversely, challenge them to identify examples of some roads less traveled.

Inquire about what beliefs and gifts of ministry Christians may have that would cause them to go down “The Road Not Taken” or a road less traveled. Ask: *What might be the logical outcome based on that decision? Regardless of the road taken, where might God be? God is everywhere, within them and around them.*



6 Helping Hands

Leader preparation: Preview and make copies of the attachments “Helping Hands” and “Helping Hands Answer Key.” Be prepared to provide background information on those “Helping Hands” agencies and organizations that the youth might know least about. This activity is designed as a challenge for youth to decide in what way they can engage themselves in giving back. The options enumerated may stimulate their imagination about different ways to serve others. The websites included on the handout are meant to be used by youth on their own time to dig a little deeper into those organizations that pique their interest.

Supplies:

- (optional) computer with Internet access
- “Helping Hands,” Attachment: Activity 6a
- “Helping Hands Answer Key,” Attachment: Activity 6b

Have the youth get into pairs, hand out copies of “Helping Hands,” and have them fill in the blanks. When they have completed the activity, provide them an opportunity to share what they may already know about these “Helping Hands” agencies or organizations. Ask: *Which organization or cause fits your gifts of ministry now? In which organization or cause might you see yourself involved in the future? What other “Helping Hands” could be added?* If you have available a computer with Internet access, you might want to have youth look up some of the organizations to find out more about them. Give each youth a copy of “Helping Hands Answer Key” to take home.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Here I Am Lord

Leader preparation: Obtain a music recording of “Here I Am, Lord” (tune: Here I Am, Lord) and a music player, or invite an accompanist to play the music for the hymn.

Supplies:

- hymn: “Here I Am, Lord” by Daniel L. Schutte (tune: Here I Am, Lord), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6fYAiqV-Bs&feature=related>

Tell the youth that they prepare themselves to serve God by discovering their gifts, knowing the traditions in the church, recognizing what mission means, and using the Word of God as their guide now and in the future. Invite them to take a few moments in silence to consider their gifts of ministry. Tell them that God is waiting for them. If available, distribute hymnals with the hymn “Here I Am, Lord.” Or play the video of the song. Invite the group to raise their voices in song. Encourage the group to keep listening to God’s voice and give of themselves. Urge them to say, “Here I am Lord!”

8 Waiting for You

Leader preparation: Youth, like adults, may lose sight of the big picture and forget why they were put on earth. This activity may give youth a perspective of what planet Earth looks like from a distance and up close. Preview the video “From a Distance.”

Supplies:

- computer and Internet access
- digital projector
- video: “From a Distance,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5_YAj9lCOc
- paper
- pencils

Ask the youth what they think God may be waiting for on planet Earth. God is still speaking, and God’s world is still a work in progress. To illustrate what creation looks like from a distance, go to the video “From a Distance” and invite everyone to watch and listen. Replay the video once more, but this time ask the group to write down the key phrases that describe how the earth looks from a distance:

- healthy environment
- harmony
- hope
- peace
- land of plenty
- no guns
- no bombs
- no disease
- community
- friends

Challenge them to express how the earth really looks on the ground. Tell the youth that the world is waiting for them to make a difference. Invite them to bow their heads in prayer.

Dear God, let us not wait for peace and harmony for this planet and all those who live on it. At every sunrise, every day, guide us to live life to the fullest—with goodwill toward our neighbors and our environment. At every sunset, let us give thanks to you for your love, care, and mercy. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



9 Risky Moves

Leader preparation: The focus of this activity is to let youth know that living the life God has in store for them may require some risk taking. Obtain, preview, and display “Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA.” Post this quotation on newsprint or a whiteboard:

Faith is taking the first step when you don’t see the whole staircase.
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Think about and prepare to share a personal story or one of someone else to illustrate that discovering the gifts from God and for God takes trial and error. Youth rarely get to see the missteps, falters, or chances that adults have taken to find purpose in their lives.

Supplies:

- artwork: "Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA," <http://www.art.com/products/p13950276-sa-i2807680/diamond-peak-nevada-usa.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=55eedd136d4049bcaab8f63c70afd3e3&searchstring=diamond+peak>
- prepared newsprint or whiteboard with Martin Luther King, Jr. quotation

Focus the attention of the group on the photo "Diamond Peak, Nevada, USA." Invite the youth to imagine themselves at the mountain's summit, poised, and ready to descend the slope. Ask everyone to stand as if they were a skier bending at the ankles, knees, and hips ready to attack the slope. Advise them that this is no bunny slope. Ask them to respond to the following questions:

- What's going through your minds as you wait to charge ahead?
- What is it that would make you feel either a little edgy or like the king of the mountain before your descent?
- Could this be a place where you feel closer to God? Why or why not?

Reflect

Think about what you have added to the itinerary of the spiritual journey of youth. Are their destinations more clear? Do they know what they need to pack in their suitcase? Do they know what gifts they have to give to others in the future? Will they know who to turn to if assistance is needed along the way?

If necessary, offer the idea that fear of the unknown is one possible reaction to the circumstance. Both skiing down a mountain and serving God can feel a little risky at times. Invite the youth to reflect on the quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., and how it relates to the photo. Be open to all the connections youth might offer. Reassure youth that both they and adults may encounter some doubts or fears when venturing out of their comfort zone for God. Share a personal story or an example of someone else to illustrate that adults make missteps, falter, or take chances to find purpose in their lives. Close with this prayer or one like it.

O God, please help us to explore, dream, and discover our God-given purpose. May our futures be in keeping with your will and a part of what your world needs in the weeks and months ahead. Amen.

Attachment: Activity 1

Crystal Ball

Where will you be living?

What will you be doing?

What one or two gifts did you not know you had?

What two or three words would sum up your hopes for the future?

Attachment: Activity 2

Labeling People

Comedian
Laugh at my idea.

Very Sensitive
Speak softly to me.

Expert
Seek my advice.

Worthless
Yell at me.

Important
Defer to me.

Insecure
Reinforce me.

Loner
Ignore my ideas.

Me Person
Ask me about myself.

Outsider
Treat me with mistrust.

Undesirable
Back away as you talk.

Over Emotional
Comfort me.

Hopeless
Encourage me.

Helpless
Give me positive support.

Hopeless
Pity me.

Shy
Listen and get me to talk.

Uninterested
Walk away when I talk.

Attachment: Activity 3

One Spirit of Love

♩ = 89
Muted strum
Light Reggae Feel

Paul B. Svenson



1. Ma - ny are the won - ders of God ma - ny
2. Some will be the tea - chers of life some the
3. Li - ving as the bo - dy of Christ and the



doors o - pen wide ma - ny roads that are still un -
prea - chers of love some the fa - thers and some the
heart of the earth and the hands that will break new



tra - veled Ma - ny are the gifts that we share
mo - thers Some will be the ones who will care
gro - und Cel - e - brate the gifts from with - in



ma - ny bur - dens we bear ma - ny
some will li - sten and share serv - ing
now its time to be - gin God's -



my - ster - ies still un - ra - veled
God as they serve each - o - ther
peo - ple can turn the world a - rou - nd now!



CHORUS Ma - ny gifts One spi - rit of love one spi - rit of love



Ma - ny gifts One spi - rit of love one spi - rit of love

"One Spirit of Love" by Paul B. Svenson, ©1987/2011 Dad's Songbook Music LLC—All rights reserved.
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Attachment: Activity 4

Spiritual Checkup

A physical checkup is routinely recommended at certain times of a person's life, such as when a person is transitioning to a middle school or participating in sports, and then periodically throughout life. A spiritual checkup, however, is recommended as a constant throughout life. The Apostle Paul challenged the people of Corinth in one of his letters: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13: 5). It's time for your routine spiritual checkup.

Mind

Do you have an open mind? If it is open, something might fall into it. Both young and old alike continue to expand their understanding and the presence of God in their lives. That is what the scriptures mean when it says, "No eye has seen, no one has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2: 9).

Heart

What is your level of compassion? How do you respond to others? Do you treat them the way you wish to be treated? Yes, this part of the exam includes The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). Do you love your enemies? If you do, you're going to change the world. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken heart dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Hands

Action is what counts in this part of the exam. How are you using your hands as a servant of God in service to others? What are some opportunities in your church, at home, or in your community where your hands could be used? Roll up your sleeves and dig into a project, big or small! "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Eyes

The condition of your eyes is extremely important. Scripture tells us, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). Do you search the landscape for God's will before you make a decision? Don't become blinded by the things on earth, but keep your eyes on the heavens.

Feet

Your feet represent whether you walk in the path of Jesus and stand up for what is right. Sometimes it may not be easy to follow the right path. Remember that wherever you are on life's journey, you are always welcomed in the church. Be aware there will be some detours on your journey. Everyone experiences some bumps in the road.

Ears

God is still speaking. Are you listening?

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by.
And that has made all the difference.

Attachment: Activity 6a

Helping Hands

Fill in each blank with one of the terms below.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| UNICEF | Volunteerism | Shelter |
| Organ Donor | Soup Kitchen | Red Cross |
| Food Pantry | Philanthropist | ASPCA |
| CASA | Amber Alert | Missionary |
| Peace Corps | Keep America Beautiful | Goodwill |
| Charity | Habitat for Humanity | Random |
| Support | Doctors without Borders | Salvation Army |

1. Giving freely of one's time and talents _____
2. Where one might go to get free food _____
3. Associated with red buckets and bells _____
4. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals _____
5. On the scene after a disaster _____
6. Provides help in foreign countries _____
7. Where food is served for the needy _____
8. Generous gifts to the needy _____
9. Where one might go to find gently used clothing _____
10. Where the homeless might go _____
11. Type of group that helps each other _____
12. Happens when a child is missing _____

Attachment: Activity 6a *(Continued)*

- 13. _____ acts of kindness _____
- 14. Person who donates huge sums of money _____
- 15. Doctors who go anywhere in the world _____
- 16. Literally giving away one's self _____
- 17. Organization that Keeps America Beautiful _____
- 18. Interested in building houses _____
- 19. A voice for neglected and abused children _____
- 20. People who promote peace around the world _____
- 21. International organization that cares about kids _____

Attachment: Activity 6b

Helping Hands Answer Key

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Giving freely of one's time and talents
www.volunteersofamerica.org | Volunteerism |
| 2. Where one might go to get free food
www.feedamerica.org | Food Pantry |
| 3. Associated with red buckets and bells
www.ringbells.org | Salvation Army |
| 4. American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
www.asPCA.org | ASPCA |
| 5. On the scene after a disaster
www.redcross.org | Red Cross |
| 6. Provides help in foreign countries
www.ucc.org/wcm/ | Missionary |
| 7. Where food is served to the needy
www.wikipedia.org/edu/wiki/Soup_kitchen | Soup Kitchen |
| 8. Generous gifts to the needy | Charity |
| 9. Where one might go to find gently used clothing
www.goodwill.org | Goodwill |
| 10. Where the homeless might go
www.partnershipforthehomeless.org | Shelter |
| 11. Type of group that helps each other
www.supportgroups.com | Support |
| 12. Happens when a child is missing
www.amberalert.gov | Amber Alert |
| 13. _____ acts of kindness
www.randomactsofkindness.org | Random |

Attachment: Activity 6b *(Continued)*

14. Person who donates huge sums of money www.learningtogive.org	Philanthropist
15. Doctors who go any where in the world www.doctorswithoutborders.org	Doctors without Borders
16. Literally giving away one's self www.organdonor.gov	Organ Donor
17. Organization that keeps America beautiful www.kab.org	Keep America Beautiful
18. Interested in building houses www.habit.org	Habitat for Humanity
19. A voice for neglected and abused children www.nationalcasa.org	CASA
20. People who promote peace around the world www.peacecorps.org	Peace Corps
21. International organization that cares about kids www.unicef.org	UNICEF