

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT



**A Resource and Guide for Pastoral Planning
for Youth Ministry in Canada**

..... by

A Team of Canadian Youth Ministers

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**A Resource and Guide for Pastoral Planning
for Youth Ministry in Canada**

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Dear Partners in Youth Ministry,

In his message for World Youth Day in 2014, Pope Francis offered this challenge:

In an age when we are constantly being enticed
by vain and empty illusions of happiness,
we risk settling for less and ‘thinking small’ when it comes to the meaning of life.
Think big instead! Open your hearts!

Whether you are just making your first steps into exploring or planning for a parish or diocesan ministry of outreach to young people and their families, or whether you are a seasoned member of a youth ministry coordinating team, you are accustomed to “thinking big.” This guide or resource for pastoral planning for youth ministry is intended to help you continue to “think big,” and also to make small steps to make dreams become a reality. This resource will assist you to reflect on your current practice, identify strengths and weaknesses in your youth ministry offerings, and build an outreach ministry that meets the real needs of young people wherever you are.

This resource arises from many years of pastoral ministry with and among young people. The authors of this resource are all seasoned and skilled youth ministers, parents, teachers and pastoral ministers with a great love for young people and for this ministry. Most of them have been offering workshops, courses and retreats with and for young people and leaders in youth and family ministry for many years. This resource for pastoral planning is the fruit of their many years of reflection on youth ministry, and labour in the vineyard. It is also the fruit of their love and commitment. I think that it will open up your vision of the field of youth ministry, and open your eyes to possibilities.

Preface

As you work through this resource, you will see that it proposes a vision of youth ministry that is broad and comprehensive. We all know that the lives of young people are increasingly complex. This vision of youth ministry may appear too big to some. Youth ministry is, indeed, a great and noble undertaking. Remember that the title of this resource is *You Give Them Something to Eat*. Jesus issued this invitation to his band of disciples; feeding God's people is a collaborative undertaking. Just as you are not asked to do this alone, neither are you asked to do it all. Instead, I encourage you to see the model of youth ministry presented here as an opportunity to match your gifts to the hungers and needs of young people, and to do *something*—something you love, something that will make a difference.

This resource is a gift. I encourage you to use it with others—your parish or diocesan youth ministry team, your retreat centre team, your parish pastoral council—to begin to “think big,” and to galvanize the power and passion of your faith community on behalf of your young people. They are not the Church of Tomorrow, but are the Young Church of Today. Together, we can give them something to eat.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "† Brian J. Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive style.

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish

*The Church needs you—
your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you.*

Pope Francis, Homily, World Youth Day 2013, n. 1.

In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 9, verses 12-17, we read the familiar story of how Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish:

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.” But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

The title of this guide for pastoral planning for youth ministry, *You Give Them Something to Eat*, is taken from this passage. It is Jesus’ instruction to his disciples, his invitation to them to become his partners in ministry, feeding and attending to the needs of the many people who had gathered. Their response is characteristic of so many in the Church today, “We only have...”. We often focus on what we do not have, rather than on the gifts we do have. Jesus takes the disciples where they are, and works wonders with their five loaves and two fish. He will do no less for us.

You Give Them Something to Eat provides a vision for ministry with young people ages 10 to 19 in the Catholic parishes and dioceses of Canada.

This guide offers a unifying vision and resources for a renewed commitment to, with, by and among young people. It encourages and invites each and every member of the faith community to accompany young people as maturing missionary disciples through their high school and post-secondary years into young adulthood, and to help them find their place in a turbulent world and a changing Church. It also calls young people to be involved in their faith community and to grow in wisdom, knowledge and engagement as they discover more fully who they are as the young Church of today and the Church of tomorrow.

Introduction

You Give Them Something to Eat offers a context for existing youth ministries and a rationale for establishing new ones. It offers a vision for ministry to, with, by and among maturing missionary disciples. The material contained in this document arises from experience, helps us to understand the present and assists us to plan for the future. It is written for young people. It is written for those who minister with and for young people. It is directed to the whole People of God. Being firmly rooted in experience, this guide for pastoral planning encourages a well-balanced, comprehensive vision of youth ministry. Helping us to understand the present, this document takes an affirming and challenging look at the Canadian reality, and offers resources to empower each faith community to do the same in its own milieu. This document offers assistance in planning for a future in which each parish, arch/diocese and community of faith has a vibrant outreach to and with young people. The appendices of this volume may be of interest to those who are involved in strategic pastoral planning for youth ministry.

The four goals and nine focus areas highlighted in this document are solidly based in Scripture and faithfully reflect Church teaching. In fact, they describe the mission of the whole Church, but in this context are applied in a particular way to young people.

Arising from years of experience, consultation and listening, this document is also an invitation to further dialogue. May it be to you, the reader and pastoral animator, an invitation to go out from here and “give them something to eat.”

*In an age when we are constantly being enticed
by vain and empty illusions of happiness,
we risk settling for less and “thinking small”
when it comes to the meaning of life.
Think big instead! Open your hearts!*

Pope Francis, Message, World Youth Day 2014, n. 2.

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

SETTING ONE: YOUTH

Adolescence and young adulthood are periods of tremendous change, for the individual and for all those with whom the young person is in relationship. The word *adolescence* comes from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means “to grow up.” Adolescence is a transitional stage of human development, a stage of transition between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence has physical, psychological, spiritual, intellectual, social and cultural dimensions.

Who are the young people of Canada today? What does their world look like? What does it feel like? What is it like to be a young person in Canada today?

Young people between 10 and 19 find themselves in a vast number of contexts. In the pages that follow, we will attempt to explore and describe some of these contexts.

Young people in a changing Canada

The face of Canada is changing, and with it, the face of young people today. We often describe Canada as a cultural mosaic. This image reflects the wonder and diversity of the ethnic and cultural face of Canada, always a country in which First Nations and Inuit peoples lived side by side with waves of immigrant peoples. With modern multiculturalism has come the blessing and challenge of religious and ethical pluralism, and of forming life-giving interfaith and ecumenical relationships

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected with young people?

What is it like to be a young person today in the setting in which we live or minister?

What have you learned lately from a young person?

How does your community of faith reach out to young people?

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The changing world of adolescence

Between the ages of 13 and 30, young people take what is probably the biggest journey of their lifetime. Traditionally, the teenage years have been seen as a journey from a place of relative security (childhood) to another place of relative security (adulthood). In adolescence, it can seem as if everything is changing within and around the young person. Life can begin to seem very complicated: there are choices to be made, confusion can replace certainty, loneliness and alienation can creep in, and young people begin to test their values as they seek a way and a place to belong.

Young people of today can be described as belonging to the “millennial generation,” those born around the turn of the 21st century. They are usually idealistic and have high expectations of the adults and the institutions in their lives (even though they test the limits of these). Their energy and idealism can be harnessed for good causes, projects and efforts. They have a strong desire and drive for involvement and engagement.

The millennial generation is relational. It is true that friends and peers become very important for young people in adolescence. At the same time, parents and trusted adults continue to have a strong impact on values and views. Young people look up to trusted mentors and guides, and will often choose adults from whom they believe that they can learn and grow into the people they want to become.

Millennials experience a changing sense of hope for a personal future; they expect the same standard of living that their parents achieved only after years of labour, and experience disillusionment when it is elusive. An emerging economic reality is that even though young people today remain in school longer and are much more highly educated than previous generations, they are the first generation since World War II to face an economic future less promising than that of their parents. Consequently, the personal debt of young people is often high. Many, after completing their education, find themselves unable to find work, and move back into their parents’ homes. Youth depression and suicide are at an all-time high. In Canada’s north, the suicide rate is exponentially higher than in the rest of the country.

In adolescence, mental health issues may become evident. Depression and isolation, body image and food-related issues may become obvious. Addictions are a concern as drugs and alcohol enter the picture. Panic and anxiety can be transitory realities or can take root as challenges to be faced over a lifetime. Teen suicide is a rising concern, as some struggle to find balance and wholeness.

Sexuality and sexual identity become major issues in adolescence. Who am I? How do I live in the world? How do I relate? And to whom do I relate? These are key questions and raise important developmental issues and guidance issues.

In adolescence and young adulthood, perhaps more than at any other phase of life, young people look for authentic witnesses and life-giving role models. If the Church is to be relevant, we must respond to this search with good role models and inspiring heroes. We must provide opportunities for young people to experiment with various forms of service and outreach. We must also open avenues for involvement in community, and provide opportunities to explore, express and deepen their faith.

In adolescence, young people become apprentices in the Christian life. They look to older role models, guides and mentors. They continue to regard these people as beacons and lighthouses, guiding their journey. At the same time, however, in this stage of life our apprentices begin to differentiate themselves from previous role models, guides and mentors, learn to make good decisions, test and determine their values, experiment with beliefs and practices, and explore communities and modes of belonging. With their curiosity and challenge, vision and courage, and sense of justice and right, young people are apprentices; they also often evangelize the rest of the Christian and world community. Certain that they can change the world, they challenge others in the community to use their gifts and influence more effectively for their sisters and brothers, particularly the materially poor and those who hover at the margins of society or Church.

The Church in Canada is called to enter into a new evangelization with young people, offering opportunities for young people to encounter Jesus Christ (or, as Pope Francis reminds us, to let Jesus encounter them!). This new evangelization must be reciprocal; the Church must be open to itself being evangelized and changed by this encounter with Jesus in and through young people. This evangelization must be new in its openness, new in its methods and means, new in its energy and vitality. Our encounter with young people must be accomplished in a missionary key, proposing something (or someONE) new, life-giving, life-changing.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What is it like to be a young person today in your corner of God's vineyard?

What are some of the cries and concerns of our young people?

What brings joy to our young people?

How does our faith community accompany young people?

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SETTING TWO: FAMILY—THE CHURCH OF THE HOME

So great was the love with which God began to walk with humanity, he began to walk with his people, until the moment of maturity arrived, and he gave the greatest sign of his love: his own Son. And where did he send his Son? In a palace? To set up a business? He sent him into a family. God has entered the world in a family. And he was able to do so because that family had a heart open to love, it had open doors.

Pope Francis, Address, Festival of Families, World Meeting of Families, September 27, 2015.

Faith is caught and taught first in the home. The Christian family has been entrusted with the mission of guarding, revealing and communicating love. Within a two-year span, Pope Francis convened both the General Extraordinary Assembly on the Family (2014) and the Ordinary General Synod on the Family (2015), both of which were given the task of listening to the signs from God and of human history which speak to the realities of family life, in fidelity to the Gospel. The bishops and other delegates assembled at the 2015 Synod on the Family reflected that “the goal of conjugal life is not simply to live together for life, but to love one another for life!”¹ More and more, it seems that love, and the possibility of finding or building lasting love and commitment, seems to be an elusive goal for modern people. The Church is challenged to provide meaningful supports for families. Today, more than ever, families are diverse in their makeup, membership, needs, joys, hopes and sorrows. Still, it remains true that most young people first learn about love, God and faith from their parents, grandparents and other trusted adults who are, or who act as, family.

Parents are the original youth ministers

“The family, beyond being called upon to respond to today’s challenges, is primarily called by God to a greater awareness of its missionary character.”² A healthy youth ministry approach fosters and supports family life, and supports the family’s efforts to form missionary disciples. It may surprise most Canadian adults to know that parents have a much greater influence on young people’s spiritual lives and religious practices than peers do. If parents give witness to their faith, it is highly likely that their children will as well. A healthy youth ministry supports parents as they model the faith and try to be intentional about passing on their faith to their children. A healthy parish also reaches out, in love and without judgment, to all families, inviting them into community and discipleship.

Family life can be very challenging. There isn’t always a solid foundation present at home. Even when there is such a foundation, it can be difficult for parents to put words around their faith, or to share

1 Synod of Bishops, XIV Ordinary General Assembly, *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World*, Final Report, October 24, 2015, n. 1

2 Ibid, n. 3.

that faith with their children. With the busy lives that most families lead today, getting the family together even for a meal can be a great achievement. Sometimes, family life is experienced with violence, abuse or addiction. Economic struggles and poverty can add stresses and strains to family life. A healthy youth ministry is sensitive to the complex reality of contemporary families.

IDEAS FOR ENHANCING THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOME....

- Listen
- Reach out
- Partner with parents
- Develop mentorship programs
- Provide an environment of encounter with Christ
- Offer specific programs aimed at affirming and enriching the lives of families of diverse make-ups, sizes, compositions, needs and strengths
- Be attentive to migrant or migratory families
- Offer practical and helpful referral services
- Offer or provide access to crisis intervention services and facilities
- Be proactive—plan to be relevant
- Offer inspiring preaching and instruction

The family, the basic human community, is painfully being weakened and is exhibiting signs of its fragile nature. Nonetheless, the family is also demonstrating its ability to find in itself the courage to confront the inadequacy and failure of institutions in the formation of the person, the quality of social ties and the care of the most vulnerable. Therefore, a proper appreciation of the resilience of the family is particularly necessary in order to be able to strengthen its fragile character. Such strength lies in the family's capacity to love and to teach how to love. As wounded as the family may be, it can always grow beginning with love.³

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we listening to our families?

What programs, events, opportunities and services does our faith community offer for families?

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³ Ibid, n. 10.

SETTING THREE: THE SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY COMMUNITY

Schools, universities and colleges are settings in which youth ministry takes place. Where there are Catholic Schools, these institutions partner with parents and parishes to prepare young people to become full and active missionary disciples of Jesus Christ. Catholic Schools offer Religious Education, offer pastoral care and support to students, teachers and families, and develop the imagination in ways that open young people to possibilities and hope. Schools can provide unique opportunities for young people to experience the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a variety of programs and activities, such as service projects, retreats, prayer services and liturgies, spiritual formation programs, leadership training, peer ministry and vocation ministry that includes education, encouragement and invitation. Many Catholic Schools have chaplaincy structures.

In many areas of Canada there are no publicly funded Catholic Schools. Public Schools also offer a variety of programs which foster and enhance the development of the total person. Many schools offer values-based programs and pastoral care initiatives. They also often offer resources, services and programs which parishes can access or partner with in service of young people and their families.

College and university campuses can be places where the gifts and qualities of the whole person are valued, nurtured and encouraged. Colleges and universities that offer chaplaincy or have faith mentors and guides available offer a valuable service to young people at a crucial moment of their development. College-age young people, with their drive, passion and idealism, are often ready to engage in meaningful social justice initiatives, to offer service to vulnerable individuals or sectors of society to engage in overseas mission activities, and to grow in their ability to advocate for marginalized persons or groups. Chaplains and faith guides can play a vital role in opening up the world, engaging young minds and hearts in the life task of becoming missionary disciples.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to schools and to the university or college community?

What resources, programs or services can parishes tap into in service of young people?

What can our parishes or diocese offer to the school, university or college community?

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SETTING FOUR: THE PARISH COMMUNITY

It is not enough for young people to hear about others' experiences of God. They need to encounter God for themselves. Something is true for young people not because someone in authority or even a friend has said it is. It is true because they have experienced it to be true. Churches would do well to provide faith experiences such as retreats, prayer experiences and mission trips to help young people encounter God for themselves.

James Penner, Rachael Harder, et al., *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church*, Foundational Research Document Commissioned by The EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable, 2012, pp. 47–51.

The youth-friendly parish is a place where young people are accepted and welcomed, grow in relationship with and belonging to Jesus Christ, and minister side by side with the adults of the community. Young people are attracted to churches that are dynamic communities and have an attractive ethos or feel. We may be tempted to think that a dynamic faith community is characterized by well-celebrated liturgies, great homilies and upbeat and lively music. However, young people most often describe a dynamic community as one that helps them grow in Christ, helps them in times of hardship, and equips them to use their talents to make a difference in the community.

Churches aiming to become more youth-friendly would do well to consider developing mentorship programs and opportunities between adults and young people, and to encourage all members to be “intentional disciples” who truly practise what they preach and to be inviting and welcoming of all.

When young people seek a church, they often are drawn by the sense of community that they see evident and experience there. Only when they see the fruits do the teachings and beliefs of the

The quality of preaching and instruction is of highest importance. Young people appreciate and grow through listening to the interpretation of Church teaching and current events presented in homilies. They appreciate opportunities to discuss content with others. They also desire to be asked for their interpretation of Scripture and Church teaching, and value opportunities to place these in dialogue with their own lived experience.

community become relevant. Young people want church teaching presented in a way that is applicable to their lives. The 1997 CCCB document *Youth at Worship* states: “youth want imaginative, concrete ideal and incarnate Christianity rather than purely intellectual concepts” (p. 30). Many complain that difficult topics such as sexuality and gender roles are rarely talked about, and when they are, they are simply referred to as a set of rules to be followed. Of course, young people also want depth of content, and opportunities to learn, explore, discuss, live and take on for themselves the tenets of Catholic faith.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

When young people look at our parish or faith community, what do they see?

What about us would be attractive to a young person?

What opportunities for involvement and service are available for young people?

SETTING FIVE: SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Young people in Canada live in a global community in which technology is readily available and rapidly changing. Many high schools and institutes of higher learning or skill development are highly technological, and students in rural areas are increasingly linked by internet, social media and other technologies to teachers and other schools in order that they might avail themselves of course offerings that would otherwise not be accessible.

It must be acknowledged that there are positive and also challenging dimensions of social media and technology.

Communication within the context of globalization and a vast array of available technologies is instantaneous. The internet is accessible in most homes and classrooms, and various means of social media keep young people in touch with peers and often parents almost continuously. Paradoxically, despite the connective potential and power of social media and other technologies, many young people seem to be more socially alienated and lonely than ever before. Many find it difficult to make or keep friends in an increasingly mobile society, and the possibility of finding and maintaining a life partner seems daunting to many. In some cases, people learn distrust when technology creates a socially deprived world in which there is no privacy and surveillance is ubiquitous. A healthy youth ministry walks with young people as they navigate the new pathways of technology, and offers life-skills development and social networks that may prove valuable in making, maintaining, and evaluating friendships.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to the world of technology and social media?

What can we learn from young people?

What perspectives and assistance can we offer to young people?

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SETTING SIX: THE WIDER COMMUNITY

It takes a village to raise a child. (African proverb)

Many young people still believe in God and are searching for a meaningful spiritual path. Others are looking for a reason to believe. Many are deeply committed to basic human rights and dignity, and are opposed to any form of discrimination. Many young people have a greater sense of stewardship for God's Creation and social justice than have previous generations.

At this point in history, young people in Canada have more disposable income than ever before. At the same time, increasing wealth throws poverty into sharp relief. The gap between rich and poor in Canada is growing, and there are marked discrepancies between opportunities that are available to many and the poverty in which others must exist.

Our young people have been born and grown up in a Church and a society in which sexual abuse of minors, fiscal mismanagement and fraud, the abuse of power, exclusion of lay people from decision-making and other scandals have created an atmosphere of distrust which can threaten to drown out the Good News. If the bearer is not perceived as trustworthy, the message may more easily be rejected. Violence and crime can make the community and world seem like threatening and frightening places for the vulnerable young person.

On the world scene, terrorism and the spectre of terrorism, war, political instability, global warming and climate change can exacerbate this sense of vulnerability. Many young people do not dream of or plan for a long and happy life. Because the future seems uncertain, instant gratification becomes the norm and trumps the sacrifice that is constitutive of long-term planning and commitments.

In this context, the Church is called to proclaim Good News with authenticity, fidelity, joy and relevance. We proclaim a Person—the Person of Jesus Christ. We proclaim the Good News of his coming among us as a human being, his love, his liberating teaching, his eternally life-giving Resurrection, and the redemption offered in and through him. We are called to share with all—and in particular the young—the joy of the Gospel.

Many young people evangelize the wider community through their concern for and action on behalf of the environment and marginalized people on the local and international levels. Many young people have only ever experienced a world and a local community that is characterized by multiculturalism, cooperation, respect and celebration of diversity. They can enrich and evangelize the rest of the community through their strengths in building communities which gather like-minded people around common causes.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to the wider civic community?

What can we learn from this wider community?

What does our faith community have to say to or offer to the wider community?

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SUMMARY

YOUTH MINISTRY—THE TASK AND THE CHALLENGES

The Task

Given the picture that has been painted, the task of youth ministry is clear. The command of Jesus, “You give them something to eat,” echoes in our ears, our hearts and our minds. It calls the Catholic Christian community to a two-fold task.

1. We are called to facilitate a life-giving and life-changing encounter between young people and Jesus Christ, and to do this with love, mercy and fidelity in the face of great change.
2. We are charged with the task of helping young people to know and reflect upon their gifts, talents, experiences, strengths and weaknesses and, in light of the Good News, commit to a life of discipleship.

The Challenges

Despite many years and many inspired initiatives in catechetical ministry in Canada, many adults and young people seem ill-equipped to give voice to their faith, to express a personal encounter or relationship with Jesus Christ, or to give an account of their hope.

Many families doubt their ability to pass on the faith with which they identify. They laud and admire their forebears for their faith, their joy, their good witness. Many school-based catechetical programs seem to have borne little fruit. In many parishes, Catholic organizations and movements seem divorced from the everyday life of people, and some who come to worship regularly seem to live as if we exist in a perpetual Lent rather than in the joy and hope of Easter.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

Because of all that we are learning and experiencing...

To what change of perspective are we called?

To what conversion are we called?

To what action are we impelled?

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Today, the Church throughout Canada must make a new and meaningful commitment to our young. They are not the Church of the Future, as is often claimed; they are the Young Church of Today. They stand at our door and at our side, hungry and seeking nourishment. To us, as to his disciples two thousand years ago, Jesus says, "You give them something to eat."

GOALS FOR EFFECTIVE YOUTH MINISTRY IN CANADA—WHAT DOES YOUTH MINISTRY AIM TO DO?

GOAL ONE:

Effective youth ministry calls the Catholic faith community to continually renew its affective and effective option for young people.

Evangelization in our time will only take place as the result of contagious joy.

Pope Francis, Message, World Youth Day 2014, n. 4.

The Church, continuing the mission of Jesus, has always expressed a preferential option for those who are marginalized or vulnerable in any way. Today the Church in Canada, in all of its settings—home, parish, diocese, school, network of friends, or small ecclesial community—must renew its option for young people. In affirming this option, we must recognize that evangelization is a mutual relationship. As we reach out to proclaim Good News to younger members, elders are also evangelized. In the 1991 CCCB statement on youth ministry, *We Are Strong Together*, the bishops of Canada referred to this as “reciprocity”. As we seek to bring about change for the good, we recognize and welcome the truth that we will be changed in the encounter. This is the dynamic of conversion. Our God, a God of surprises, uses each and every member of the Body of Christ to bring about the Reign of God.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected in this relationship of reciprocal conversion with young people?

What are we doing well?

What challenges do we face?

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GOAL TWO:

Effective youth ministry fosters the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

In proclaiming the Beatitudes, Jesus asks us to follow him and to travel with him along the path of love, the path that alone leads to eternal life. It is not an easy journey, yet the Lord promises us his grace and he never abandons us. We face so many challenges in life: poverty, distress, humiliation, the struggle for justice, persecutions, the difficulty of daily conversion, the effort to remain faithful to our call to holiness, and many others. But if we open the door to Jesus and allow him to be part of our lives, if we share our joys and sorrows with him, then we will experience the peace and joy that only God, who is infinite love, can give.

Pope Francis, Message, World Youth Day 2014, n. 1.

In its preferential option for the young, the Church is concerned not only for the good of souls, but for the development of keen minds and sharp intellects. The Church advocates healthy physical development; we challenge behaviours that might place that health at risk. Christian community promotes sound moral development. The Church advocates good emotional and mental health and development. We walk with young people as they grow spiritually, gradually opening before them the vast storehouse of the Church's Tradition of prayer, liturgy, literature and story, doctrine and music. The Church provides role models from the past and current role models, and assists young people as they develop meaningful relationships across generations and across time.

Well-balanced youth ministry promotes and actively works to provide for the growth of healthy, competent, caring and faith-filled Catholic Christian young people, who will grow to become healthy, competent, caring and faith-filled Catholic Christian adults.

This means that, as the Church in Canada stands for healthy development and works to promote all that makes this possible, the Church stands emphatically against the factors that mitigate against such healthy development—poverty, child exploitation and human trafficking, unemployment and underemployment, discrimination, and social injustice of all kinds.

By engaging young people in active discipleship through a model of apprenticeship, the Church incarnates its certainty that young people are not only the Church of Tomorrow; they are the Young Church of Today.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to the real worlds of the young people in our midst?

What do we hear as we listen to young people?

What do we offer to our young people?

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GOAL THREE:

Effective youth ministry invites and empowers young people to live as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.

Dear young people, please, don't be observers of life, but get involved. Jesus did not remain an observer, but he immersed himself. Don't be observers, but immerse yourself in the reality of life, as Jesus did.

Pope Francis, Address, Prayer Vigil, July 27, 2013, n. 3.

Youth ministry sets out consciously to facilitate moments of encounter between young people and the God who loves them, Jesus Christ who redeems them and the Spirit who sustains them. Youth ministry then assists and accompanies young people as they learn what it means to follow Jesus and to live as his disciples today. Youth ministry offers opportunities and settings in which young people may safely explore what it means for them to live as people sent on mission. Effective youth ministry offers young people opportunities for them to explore their gifts and their weaknesses in order that, gradually, they may come to an awareness of the dream that God has for each one of them, their calling or vocation in life.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to young people who are seeking to know their calling in life?

How do we facilitate an encounter between the individual and Jesus Christ?

In what ways do we help young people to grow in that relationship?

In what ways do we open doors for the young to challenge the elders?

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GOAL FOUR:

Effective youth ministry draws young people to participate responsibly in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community.

What is needed today is a church which knows how to respond to the expectations of young people. Jesus wants to enter into dialogue with them and, through his body, which is the Church, to propose the possibility of a choice, which will require a commitment of their lives. As Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus, so the Church must become the traveling companion of young people.

Pope John Paul II, Message, World Day of Prayer for Vocations 1995, n. 2.

Well-balanced and effective youth ministry operates on a model of apprenticeship. With a variety of role models to observe, and consistent effort and commitment over time, the Church opens up before the youngest among us a variety of options and concrete ways that they might participate responsibly in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community. If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes an entire Catholic Christian community to grow a missionary disciple.

Growing as missionary disciples involves being drawn ever more deeply into the life, prayer, service, worship and ways of the Catholic Christian community. Called through Baptism and sent out as missionaries from each Sunday Eucharist, young people grow in wisdom, knowledge and grace alongside other missionary disciples as they walk the road together.

Ministry to and with young people must engage them as apprentices. As with apprentice carpenters or electricians, young disciples first observe master craftspeople in ministry in the midst of and to the wider community. Thus, they explore and try out possibilities for how and where they might best use their God-given gifts and talents, skills and abilities. Then, they are gently invited into limited, guided opportunities for involvement. Finally, they engage in ministry as an experienced Christian watches, guides and offers wisdom.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What opportunities for apprenticeship are offered in and through our faith community?

How are young people invited into service?

Are our young people being invited into life as missionary disciples?

What are we doing well? In what areas are we called to grow, change and develop?

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ELEMENTS OF A WELL-BALANCED MINISTRY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

... we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the "night" contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus.

Pope Francis, Address, to the Bishops of Brazil at World Youth Day, July 28, 2013, n. 3.

The People of God in Canada are called to an ever-greater awareness that the entire community must be a youth-ministering community. The nine elements described in this section offer a well-balanced vision of youth ministry. They offer a framework to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community, and for the larger community to respond to young people. These elements also highlight the importance of local creativity in developing programs, activities, events and strategies.

Each element supports and enhances the others. A good balance among all of them is essential. Each element has its own importance, but no one person, group or agency can do it all! And certainly, all elements cannot be realized in the same place and at the same time. Different groups and agencies, and different communities, will naturally have different emphases and strengths as they endeavour to incarnate the Gospel in their particular time and place. One group may be drawn to prayer and worship, while another may have a particular strength and passion for justice and service. All are important. A healthy balance can only be achieved through intentional and life-giving collaboration on the part of all sectors of the community.

Evangelization and catechesis are at the heart of youth ministry. The Church exists to evangelize. All other elements revolve around this core truth.

Ministry in each of these nine areas can take place in a gathered format—with small or large groups, or it can take place in a non-gathered format—one-on-one, over the phone, via the internet or through social media. Implementing this vision does not require a great outlay of resources or money; what it does require is open minds, generous hearts and the hospitality and creativity to welcome young people into our lives and into the life of the Church. Thus, we will form a new generation of missionary disciples.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What do you understand to be the elements of a well-balanced youth ministry?

What does youth ministry look like in your corner of the vineyard?

How is your faith community engaged with young people?

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Element 1: The Ministry of Evangelization

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (*Luke 4:17-19*)

The ministry of evangelization is about being captured by the joy of the Gospel, and then compelled to share the Good News. Through evangelization, young people are called into a personal and life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ in and through the Church. This is an encounter with the love and mercy of God made flesh in Jesus.

The love is expressed to each individual as an invitation: “Come, follow me.” The invitation is irresistible; we are compelled to respond. Faith is the “yes” by which we respond to this invitation. When we respond to God’s invitation with our “yes,” we go forth as missionaries to make this love known to the world, and to invite others to also say “yes.”

Through the ministry of evangelization, young people are empowered to discover and recognize the experience of a God who is already present and active in their lives. Jesus, through the Christian community, reaches out to young people where they are, as they are. Jesus knows the longings of each human heart.

Effective evangelization with, to, by and for young people requires a language and methods adapted to contemporary times, places and situations. Youth ministry must reach out to young people who are actively engaged in the faith community; it must also reach out to and engage the large numbers of young people who have been baptized, but who have not identified with the Church nor found a home with us. The mission of evangelization demands that we find new and creative tools for reaching out, inviting and engaging these young people, forming them to become missionary disciples.

The ministry of evangelization is the energizing core of all ministry with young people. The challenge is to ensure that all relationships and programs offered in and through our Christian community are proclamations of Good News. Through the ministry of evangelization, young people come to know and love Jesus Christ and to recognize their giftedness and vocation, their calling in life. Through the ministry of catechesis, the love is deepened and grows stronger.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How do we evangelize with and among young people?

How do we invite them into a relationship with Jesus and the Church?

How do young people and their families and friends evangelize us?

What can we learn? What can we do?

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Element 2: The Ministry of Catechesis

The ministry of catechesis assists young people in deepening the relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church that is begun through the ministry of evangelization. Catechesis opens young Christians to the life-long project of discovering who they are and Whose they are. Through formal and informal catechesis, young people learn how to live in community and how they can be actively involved in the life and mission of the Church. Catechesis nourishes the faith of young believers and leads them into greater communion and intimacy with Jesus.

Catechesis, then, is an apprenticeship in the Christian way of life. It seeks to initiate young people into believing, celebrating, living and praying all that the Christian community believes, celebrates, lives and prays. Catechesis takes place first in families, and also in parishes, schools, groups and movements. Effective catechesis engages the mind, the imagination, the heart and the hands.

Developing a deeper relationship with Jesus and the Christian community involves learning more about Scripture and the rich storehouse of tradition that is the Catholic faith. This deeper relationship challenges young people to live more faithfully and authentically as disciples in their daily life. It also calls them outward, into loving and meaningful missionary service. This deeper relationship is sustained through prayer and participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Catholic Christian community.

Those who catechize the young must themselves be authentic disciples.

*People listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers,
and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.*

Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, n. 41.

Genuine faith requires a total response of the total person; mind, heart, imagination and hands. The ministry of catechesis fosters growth in all these areas of human life. A well-balanced youth ministry will involve catechetical programs, events and opportunities. These must respond to the actual needs of the young people, and must be fluid enough to respond to particular situations and needs that emerge as life unfolds.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How do we catechize young people in our community?

How do we engage them as apprentices in the Christian way of life?

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Element 3: The Ministry of Intentional Relationships

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

(Mark 1:16-20)

A key insight of the Church’s engagement in “the New Evangelization” has been our growing awareness that at its very core, faith is a living, life-changing encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ, lived out in and through the Church. Most people will encounter Jesus Christ in and through his people, either through individuals or groups. The Church in Canada must decide to enter into relationships

with young people. In the encounter, the young people will be challenged and affirmed, grow and be changed. Likewise, the community will be challenged and affirmed, grow and be changed.

In entering into intentional relationships with young people, the Church affirms that we wish to live, to push forward into the next generation, to be relevant.

When we decide to enter into relationship, we open ourselves to the possibility of conversion.

In an increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic Canada, young people grow up in a variety of ecumenical and interfaith relationships. A healthy youth ministry equips young people with the skills and capacities for respectful engagement, listening and sharing of the richness of each tradition within families, in friendships and in workplaces.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to young people in our faith community?

What are our opportunities for forming intentional relationships?

What can we learn from these relationships?

How might we grow as disciples in relationship?

What can we do to make this vision a reality?

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Element 4: The Ministry of Advocacy

Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.

Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy. (*Proverbs 31:8-9*)

Advocacy is about crying out on behalf of another. The Christian community needs to provide strong moral leadership—to stand with and for young people, especially those who are voiceless, powerless

or on the margins of society. A healthy youth ministry empowers young people to join their voices and cry out on behalf of those in need. The ministry of advocacy works to overcome poverty, provide decent jobs and promote equal opportunity. Those who are poor, vulnerable and at risk are those for whom the Church has the greatest solicitude.

Advocacy really has three dimensions:

- Advocacy for the place and importance of young people within the Church at large and the local faith community specifically;
- Advocacy for young people who are marginalized by society or who experience particular challenges; and
- Providing opportunities for young people to become involved in advocacy themselves, and to assume leadership roles as advocates.

Advocacy involves developing partnerships and initiatives with leaders and concerned citizens from all sectors of the wider community, with the aim of building a shared vision and mutually beneficial practical strategies.

The ministry of advocacy encourages the Church to examine its own practice of fully integrating young people into the life of the Church. How are the voices of the young heard in our parishes, in our dioceses and in the Church throughout Canada? How are the gifts, talents, energy and challenge of young people welcomed, respected and called forth? The Church must model what it advocates for society at large.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected?

Where can we best focus our call to advocacy?

Who among us has no voice? How might we allow their voice to be heard?

Who among us is vulnerable, disenfranchised, lonely, marginalized or forgotten?

What can we do on their behalf?

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Element 5: The Ministry of Justice and Service

... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. (*Matthew 25:35-36*)

A constitutive element of the message of Jesus Christ is his call to work for justice, to serve those in need, to pursue peace and to defend the life, dignity and rights of all. We know too, from his stories and images, that Jesus had a deep love for all that God has created. This moves us toward a creative response to God's call to be responsible stewards of all Creation.

Young people are characteristically generous and idealistic. They want to make a difference. It is rarely difficult to engage their imagination, energy and passion in service of others, and of Jesus. In engaging in the corporal works of mercy—feeding those who are hungry, giving shelter to homeless folk, consoling those in sorrow, welcoming the stranger and serving the poor—young people quickly catch on to the truth that in giving, we receive. Young people are eager audiences for the message that, in addition to service that addresses immediate needs, we must also work together to address the concrete causes of human suffering and injustice.

The ministry of justice also includes committing oneself to peace-making and peace-building in situations of conflict. In homes, schools, places of social interaction, on the internet and social media and in places of work, the ministry of justice teaches and shares with young people the skills for conflict management and resolution. A further challenge of peacemaking is to embrace a consistent Christian commitment to life in all situations where life is threatened.

One of the greatest challenges in the present age is care for our planet, including people, animals and the natural environment. This is a challenge that many young people are eager, willing and excited to embrace.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected with the needs of our community?

What opportunities or needs for service meet the gifts of our young people?

What opportunities for meaningful encounter can we facilitate?

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Element 6: The Ministry of Community Life

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (*1 Corinthians 12:12-13*)

Jesus proclaimed God's Reign in and through the relationships that he initiated, the conversations that he had, and the stories that he told. The community life of the early Christians was a sign that Christ was indeed in their midst. A Gospel-based ministry of community life is rooted in who we are, shown in what we do and lived out in how we interact. Building Christian community for and with young people involves

- welcoming people, welcoming their gifts and talents and helping them to feel that they belong;
- welcoming God into the midst of the gathering and into the conversation;
- creating environments that are authentic, positive, accepting, understanding and prayerful; places where learning and growth may occur in safety; and
- assuring young people that they are valued, cared for and needed.

Through effective youth ministry, young people become more visible in and to the faith community. This allows relationships to grow; older generations enter into contact and engagement with the young, and young people are consciously engaged with their peers and others who then benefit from the energy, drive and gifts of the young.

Increasingly, we are conscious that young people build and find community on the internet and through social media. The Christian community is challenged to find ways to maximize the community-building potential of the virtual world, and to walk there with our young people. A major responsibility of the community will be to keep safeguarding uppermost in mind and to minimize risks.

Youth ministry thrives when the wider community is welcoming and all members, regardless of age, know that they are valued and their contributions appreciated. This mutual openness of heart is the essence of hospitality.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How are we connected to young people and their families?

How do we build intentional community with them?

How do we draw on the possibilities of the internet and social media to connect people?

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Element 7: The Ministry of Leadership Development

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (*1 Corinthians 12:4-7*)

The ministry of leadership development aims to call forth, affirm and empower the gifts and abilities of young people in and for our faith communities. Leadership development is a theme as well as an element of a well-balanced youth ministry.

An essential aspect of the ministry of leadership development is forming intentional relationships. It is often said that young people choose their own mentors; therefore, it is important that the Christian community provide a wide variety of mentoring adults through whom and in whom young people begin to see potential for themselves, take on mentors, and begin to learn the skills of leadership. In addition to this informal yet very intentional ministry, a well-balanced youth ministry includes formal opportunities for exploring and growing in leadership ability. Skills for leadership can be taught, practised and refined. A youth-ministering community is one which provides opportunities for young people to try on various roles and ministries in safety, and to grow in confidence and ability until they are flying on their own.

Youth ministers work toward redundancy. They work toward the day when they will no longer be necessary in the life of the young people who have grown in wisdom, age, knowledge and confidence into taking their rightful places in the community. The entire community must also make room for young people, to nurture and support them. They are the young Church of today, as well as the Church of tomorrow.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What opportunities do we offer for young people to be apprenticed to grow as leaders?

How might the apprenticeship model of forming missionary disciples offer us hope?

What do we have to offer to our young people?

What do young people have to offer to our community?

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Element 8: The Ministry of Pastoral Care

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (*John 10:10-11*)

The ministry of pastoral care is deeply rooted in relationship and in providing compassionate presence that ensures that the special attention of the community is directed toward those who are lost in any way. It is a sharing in the ministry of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who came that all might have life, and have it to the full (*John 10:10*).

The ministry of pastoral care involves four dimensions:

- Promotion of healthy development and life-enhancing behaviours;
- Prevention of at-risk behaviours and tendencies;
- Care for youth in crisis; and
- Advocacy

Through the ministry of pastoral care with, by, for and among young people, healing and growth is fostered within individuals and in their relationships and communities. The ministry of pastoral care nurtures growth toward wholeness, provides guidance in decision-making, and challenges obstacles to healthy development.

As young people experience effective pastoral care, they are empowered to move out in compassionate care for others. Modelling and mentoring young people in concrete ways of reaching out to others is teaching a life skill that will be of great value to young people as they grow in wisdom, age and grace.

Effective engagement in the ministry of pastoral care can only be possible through engagement in and partnering with youth-serving agencies in the wider civic community. Through the ministry of pastoral care, young people come to know and be assured of the care, concern and assistance of a wider community who love them and care for them when they themselves may feel the least worthy or lovable. Creating networks of support for young people in times of concern or crisis is a constitutive element of effective youth ministry.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What are the cries of young people, their families and friends?

How can we assist them toward growth and fullness of life?

What does our faith community have to offer?

How do we guide and sustain young people?

What does the pastoral care of young people look like in this corner of the vineyard?

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Element 9: The Ministry of Prayer and Worship

Prayer is pure receptivity to God's grace, love in action, communion with the Spirit who dwells within us, leading us, through Jesus, in the Church, to our heavenly Father.

(Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, World Youth Day 2008, July 20, 2008.)

Through ministry of prayer and worship, young people are accompanied as they find the voice with which they will offer their personal and communal thanks to God. In prayer and worship, young people deepen their relationship with God in Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, and they celebrate that relationship.

Through the ministry of prayer and worship, the vast storehouse of the Church's devotional, scriptural, liturgical, sacramental and mystical tradition and history is laid out before young people, in ways and expressions that are developmentally and situationally appropriate. Silence and verbal prayer, song and poetry are laid out before people. This awakens their awareness of the Spirit at work in their lives, as it incorporates them more fully into the sacramental life of the Church, particularly the Eucharist. As new avenues of prayer are opened through youth ministry, they must be offered opportunities for their personal relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to be nurtured and to find expression. Through youth ministry, avenues of possibility are also opened up for family and group prayer and rituals.

Encouraging and forming young people in service roles in the liturgy is an important aspect of youth ministry. Older members of the faith community can teach and mentor young people as they begin to offer their gifts in liturgical ministries. Sometimes, this will mean being able to let go, so that the gifts of the young can shine.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How do we pray with young people?

How do we pray for young people?

How do we teach prayer?

What does our faith community offer to young people as they grow in prayer?

What might we learn about prayer from young people?

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Conclusion

Those who are engaged in youth ministry in Canada undertake a great challenge, and open themselves to great blessings and immense reward.

These ministers of the Church, and the parishes, diocese and ecclesial communities to whom they belong, are privileged to accompany young disciples on their journey as they are being formed and moulded for missionary discipleship. These youth ministers are anointed and sent to “give them something to eat.”

Young people, too, give the Church and the wider community “something to eat.” As they experience the joy of the Gospel through all the elements of effective youth ministry, they are called and sent to share that joy with all.

To you young people I especially entrust the task of restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture. Faced with old and new forms of poverty—unemployment, migration and addictions of various kinds—we have the duty to be alert and thoughtful, avoiding the temptation to remain indifferent. We have to remember all those who feel unloved, who have no hope for the future and who have given up on life out of discouragement, disappointment or fear. We have to learn to be on the side of the poor, and not just indulge in rhetoric about the poor! Let us go out to meet them, look into their eyes and listen to them. The poor provide us with a concrete opportunity to encounter Christ himself, and to touch his suffering flesh. (Pope Francis, Message, World Youth Day 2014, n. 3.)

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

As you ponder these nine elements of vibrant youth ministry...

What is new for you?

What is affirmed?

How are you challenged by what you are reading here?

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A CALL TO ACTION– GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH MINISTRY

Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one’s life.
(Pope Francis, Homily, April 14, 2013, n. 2.)

At this moment in our history, there is a great need for a refocusing, a recommitment, a revitalization and a renewal of the efforts of the Church in Canada for ministry with, by, for and among young people.

As we look around our vast country, it is evident that there are many wonderful initiatives being done by many people, parishes, dioceses and faith communities on behalf of our young. We often hear it said that young people are the Church of Tomorrow. This is an incomplete and misleading statement. Young people are a vital part of the Church of Today. They are here in our midst. Young people have gifts to offer and needs to be met here and now, as well as in the future.

The following action points might guide the renewed efforts toward the inclusion of young people in our faith communities.

1. **Effective youth ministry advocates for the inclusion of young people in all aspects of Church life**

All parishes are called to be inclusive of young people, and to create and maintain structures that make this inclusion possible. Young people, called in Baptism and Confirmation and sent on mission through the Eucharist, are called to full, conscious and active participation in all areas of ecclesial life: liturgical, spiritual, social, catechetical and service.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How do we advocate for the inclusion of young people in all aspects of the life of the Church?

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Conclusion

2. Effective youth ministry requires preparation, education and formation of the entire parish or faith community

The entire parish or faith community is called to be a youth-ministering community. The parish or faith community must receive the preparation, education and formation necessary to make the members effective agents of God's love and message of joy and hope for the young people in their midst. The parish or faith community must also have the love, passion and skill to reach out to, include and support families of young people. To be a youth-ministering community is to be a family-respectful and family-friendly community.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What preparation does our faith community need in order to be reoriented for a new focus on youth ministry?

How do we pray with and for young people?

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3. Effective youth ministry requires intentional recruitment, training and support of volunteers

The entire parish or faith community is called to be a youth-ministering community. This means, in part, that the particular gifts of some to exercise this ministry in the name of and on behalf of the entire community must be called forth, nurtured, developed and sustained. Each diocese must develop a plan and structures for the formation and support of youth ministry. This includes a well-thought-out and supported formation process for youth ministers.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How might we recruit volunteers for this revitalized youth ministry?

How will we offer appropriate formation?

How will we plan for the support of our volunteers?

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Conclusion

4. Effective youth ministry fosters collaborative relationships with the wider community

Young people and their families live within a complex network of relationships within an ever-widening circle of communities. Within that wider community, there are resources available that the parish may access as part of its outreach to youth and their families. In particular, the health-care sector, the social services sector, and certain business networks may prove to offer valuable resources. Together, we are stronger.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How will we build relationships in support of our ministry with and among young people?

What can we learn from young people?

What does our faith community have to say to young people?

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5. Effective youth ministry fosters intentional relationships with families

Youth ministry is inherently family ministry. When parishes and dioceses support and provide services to enhance family life, they also fulfill an essential element of youth ministry. These efforts have to be intentional and form part of a pastoral plan for outreach to young people.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How do we currently foster a healthy relationship with our families?

How might we do this relationship-building more effectively?

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6. Effective youth ministry is sustained in a team/collaborative model

- a. Diocesan commissions or committees
- b. Parish coordinator of youth ministry
- c. Parish coordinating teams
- d. The entire parish ministers to and with youth

To be effective, youth ministry must be a pastoral priority. Structures and roles that support and further youth ministry include parish and diocesan coordinators of youth ministry who work in collaboration with support teams and commissions to incarnate or put flesh on the pastoral plan for youth ministry for the parish or diocese. According to the oft-quoted proverb, it takes a village to raise a child. It takes all members of the Catholic Christian community, working together, to offer a viable youth ministry that is effective and meaningful.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How can this community be better formed for collaboration for youth ministry?

What strengths do we have for such a model?

What are the challenges we face?

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Conclusion

7. Effective youth ministry is needs-based and addresses real needs

Each faith community must be involved in an ongoing assessment of the needs of young people and their families. We must work toward building structures, programs, events and opportunities that meet these needs.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How is our current youth ministry needs-based?

How might we be more attentive to the needs of our young people and their families?

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8. Effective youth ministry takes time to grow

Rome was not built in a day. Good, effective youth ministry that meets real needs is not built overnight. An initial five-year pastoral plan for youth ministry might be developed by each diocese, with yearly evaluation or check-in structures included.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

Are we in this for the long haul?

Are we committed?

What do we need to make this vision a reality?

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9. Effective youth ministry demands appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures for vulnerable people

Each diocese in Canada is compelled by conscience and compassion to have a special concern to the young and those who are in any way vulnerable. Effective safeguarding procedures and structures are also mandated by law in each province and territory. Every professional youth minister, minister of the Church and volunteer involved in youth ministry is required to be properly trained, formed and supervised for their particular role, and to undergo a regular criminal record check and vulnerable sector check.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

Are we guided by conscience and compassion as we attend to appropriate safeguarding processes and procedures?

Are we in compliance with civil and canon law in our requirements and processes?

What have we learned from experience?

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Conclusion

10. Effective youth ministry is empowered and sustained through inclusion in parish and diocesan budgets

A budget is as much a pastoral document as it is a fiscal measure; how we spend our money shows what our pastoral priorities really are. The costs associated with building, growing and maintaining a life-giving, life-nurturing, out-reaching youth ministry will be considerable. The greatest cost will be not in dollars, but in the serious commitment and effort, time and energy that will be required. We call on each diocese, parish and faith community to include salaries, formation, education, programs and events for youth ministry in its fiscal plan each year. Our youth are worth it.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

What does our budget reveal about our pastoral priorities?

What realignments must we make in order to make youth ministry a pastoral priority?

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11. Effective youth ministry requires accredited education, training and formation structures and procedures for coordinators

There are many accredited institutions and programs offering education, training and formation for youth ministry. Parishes, dioceses and faith communities would do well to partner with these accredited institutions and programs in providing and making accessible sound and effective training for parish and diocesan coordinators.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

How attentive is our community to providing for the ongoing training of parish and diocesan personnel in youth ministry?

What can we do to make formation and training a priority?

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Conclusion

12. Coordinators of youth ministry must be recognized, authorized and supported by the competent Church authority

Coordinators of youth ministry at the parish level must be mandated, appointed and supported by the pastor and parish pastoral council. Coordinators of youth ministry at the diocesan level must be mandated, appointed and supported by the bishop and the diocesan pastoral council. All members of Christ's faithful are challenged to make youth and youth ministry a pastoral and ecclesial priority.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS...

Do we have a diocesan or parish ritual of commissioning for staff and volunteers in youth ministry?

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A FINAL WORD...

Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love.

Pope Francis, Homily, World Youth Day 2013, July 28, 2013, n. 1.

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From 1992 to 2012, Jean served in the Diocese of London, Ontario, as the Coordinator of Youth Ministry for the community of St. John the Baptist. From 2009 to 2014, Jean held the position of Youth Ministry Formation Specialist at the Institute for Catholic Formation at St. Peter’s Seminary in London, Ontario. In 2014, Jean served as leader of the planning team for the Authentic Witness and Evangelization (AWE) conference in London, bringing Catholic youth ministers, youth ministry leaders, teachers, campus ministers and parents together for a five-day conference focusing on the development and skills for evangelization and faith conversation with young people. Jean continues to work with parishes on the formation work of implementing *Strong Catholic Families, Strong Catholic Youth*. She is an advisory board member and faculty member of the Canadian Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies program.

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Pat served as Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Andrew the Apostle parish in Sudbury, Ontario, from 1995 to 1999. She then became the Diocesan Coordinator of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie until 2004. She was Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Redemptorists from 2005 to 2009, until she was asked to become director of the Canadian Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies, a position she held until 2012. Pat is a member of the faculty for the Canadian Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies. Currently she is retired but volunteers in her parish and as a palliative care hospice assistant.

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Sr. Francine has been involved in youth ministry for over 40 years. Throughout these past four decades, she has served as a teacher, a high school chaplain, a parish catechetical and youth ministry leader, and Diocesan Youth Coordinator for the Diocese of Montreal. She has participated in five World Youth Days (Denver, Paris, Rome, Cologne and Rio de Janeiro), and is currently the Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Salesian sisters in Canada and for the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall, Ontario. She is a member of the faculty for the Canadian Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies.

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Although born in Toronto, Susannah considers Ottawa her home town as most of her childhood was spent there. After high school, Susannah went to France and lived at l'Arche for two years near Trosly. She then returned to Ottawa where she received a Bachelor in Theology from St. Paul's University. Her MTS is from St. Peter's and King's College, UWO. Susannah's professional life has been primarily as a chaplain. First, with cadets in a military setting and then in an acute care facility in Midland, Ontario, where she lived for seven years. She has since returned to Toronto. Susannah served as director of the CCYMS program until 2015. She enjoys reading, walking, cycling and practices hatha yoga.

Miles Meyers, B.A., M.R.E.

Miles comes with a rich history steeped in Catholic Religious Education in Regina. Miles was instrumental in the development of both the Youth Liturgical Leadership and Youth Retreat Leadership programs which are now used by Catholic school divisions across Canada. Miles was also a contributing author to the faith program *Build Bethlehem Everywhere: A Statement on Catholic Education*. While he sits on many boards that pertain to youth ministry and education, he is currently the Coordinator of Catholic Education Services for the Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division. Miles is a member of the faculty for the Canadian Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies.

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THEMES WITHIN A WELL-BALANCED VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

1. Identity

Growing in self-awareness and self-knowledge is an essential dimension of human growth. In the teenage years, young people typically begin to differentiate themselves from parents. Parents continue to remain very important figures. It is important for the community to offer adult and peer role models and avenues for exploring these relationships for young people.

2. Catholic identity

Growing in knowledge and awareness of who they are as Catholic Christians is another key theme in adolescent development. A well-balanced youth ministry offers opportunities, events and programs that assist young people as they explore belief in God, develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the Church, grow in discernment, discover ways and means of prayer, develop a Sacramental view of the world and of life, and develop sound Christian ethics, morals and values.

3. Effective leadership and leadership development

A well-balanced ministry with young people fosters and enhances the development of their skills for leadership. Some people have innate abilities and are natural leaders, but many skills can be taught, practised and honed. Effective youth ministry teaches skills and offers practical and safe opportunities, programs and venues in which these can be practised, critiqued and developed.

4. Safe environments

Good leadership promotes good practice in many areas, particularly in the essential area of safeguarding young people and other vulnerable members of the community. Good practice in the area of safeguarding young people will ensure that in youth ministry, all necessary professional boundaries are respected. It will also contribute to the development of healthy personal boundaries for the young people in our care.

5. Developmentally appropriate

Human development begins at conception and ends at death. A well-balanced youth ministry fosters the healthy development of the whole person—physical, psychological, spiritual, intellectual and artistic.

6. Multiple intelligences

There are many ways to be smart. Well-balanced youth ministry, in collaboration with other community agencies and educational institutions, offers young people avenues of exploration through which they come to discover and develop their particular forms of intelligence: social, kinesthetic, moral, religious, emotional, intellectual, musical, artistic and intuitive. The principle of multiple intelligences also opens up for young people the importance of community and of cultivating a collaborative approach to life, ministry and leadership.

7. Partnering with families, family-respectful and family-friendly

Well-balanced youth ministry sees itself as a partner with the family in fostering the development of the whole young person, is respectful of the family, no matter what its composition or face, and is family-friendly in outlook and structures.

8. Creative, participative, flexible and fun programming

Not all young people have the same interests, strengths and needs; not all young people or families are available at the same time or for the same amount of time. Well-balanced youth ministry, therefore, offers a variety of programs, resources, events, leaders and opportunities from which young people can choose.

9. Intergenerational

Healthy adolescent development is enhanced through interaction with a variety of role models of all ages and through intentional and casual relationship-building with people of all ages from the wider community.

10. Community-wide collaboration

Well-balanced youth ministry does not try to be all things to all people, nor does it try to meet all of the needs of young people and their families by itself. Well-balanced youth ministry recognizes that other community agencies, services and institutions offer programs, services, events, resources, facilities and opportunities that the parish can and should have knowledge of and take advantage of as it reaches out effectively to young people. Well-balanced youth ministry fosters and builds bridges in the wider civic community.

11. Parish-owned

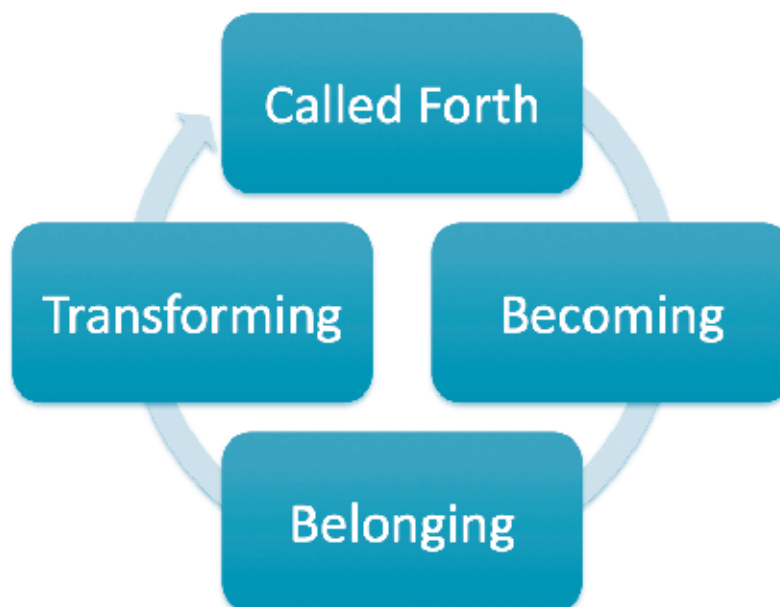
Well-balanced, healthy, varied and respectful youth ministry cannot be the territory of one person or even a group of people. Youth ministry must be parish-owned, a pastoral priority of the entire parish community, if it is to be a visible, vital and meaningful outreach of the community.

12. Fostering a culture of vocation for all

God calls all, through Jesus, in the Church to a relationship of love that is life-long and beyond.

GOALS OF YOUTH MINISTRY ROOTED IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Mission of the Church	Goals of Youth Ministry
Invite persons to deeper communion with the Church and the life of the Church	<i>Called Forth:</i> To call the Catholic faith community to continually renew its affective and effective option for young people
Proclaim the Good News	<i>Becoming:</i> To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person
Be a people of faith, hope and love	<i>Belonging:</i> To invite and empower young people to live as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
Bring God's love and justice to all through service	<i>Transforming:</i> To draw young people to participate responsibly in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community



VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth Ministry is the response of the Christian Community to the needs of young people fostering their development as Catholic Christians and drawing them into responsible participation in the life, mission and ministry of the Church.

“Youth Ministry is the response of the Christian Community to the needs of young people...”

ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS:

- Parish youth ministry is ideally coordinated by a youth commission. Their role is to assist the whole parish respond to the needs of its young people by assessing and prioritizing needs, planning ministry responses and recruiting and supporting volunteers.
- Where possible a full or part time Coordinator of Youth Ministry is hired to collaborate with the youth commission in coordinating the parish’s pastoral response to the needs of youth and families. Together they lead the parish in fulfilling the vision of youth ministry.
- Youth ministry must be based on the actual needs of the young people, not solely on what adults believe the needs are.

“...fostering their development as Catholic Christians...”

FOSTER THEIR FAITH:

The fundamental aim of youth ministry is to foster faith and encourage a fullness of human development, not just to run popular programs and activities. Even though parish programs and activities have value in themselves, they are most importantly the means of putting young people in relationship with positive adult and peer role models.

“...and drawing them into responsible participation in the life, mission and ministry of the Church.”

INVOLVE THEM IN THE CHURCH:

Youth ministry is not just TO youth but WITH, FOR and BY youth:

- Ministry TO youth: programs and activities offered to youth by adults and peers of the community
- Ministry WITH youth: young people becoming involved with adults and peers in the various ministries of the Church
- Ministry FOR youth: adult identifying the needs and concerns of youth and advocating on their behalf
- Ministry BY youth: young people ministering to others

By including a variety of programs, groups, events and services, youth ministry efforts seek to include all young people of the parish. Special concern should be given to assuring that all young people between grade five and the end of high school are included even if they do not have the habit of Sunday Eucharist. Parishes can effectively accomplish this through a balance of gathered and non-gathered programming.

The vision cannot be realized by family, school, community or parish alone. Research now shows that the answer is found in unity and collaboration between the HOME, the SCHOOL, the COMMUNITY and the PARISH.

Source: Diocese of London

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR PARISH COORDINATOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

1. General Responsibilities

The Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM) provides vision and coordination for the parish's efforts in ministry to young people from 12 through 19 years of age. This includes high school and middle school sessions (weekly or bi-weekly gatherings), monthly activities, coordination of social justice projects and programs, catechesis and sacramental preparation (Confirmation).

2. Accountability

The CYM is a member of the parish pastoral staff who reports directly to the pastor.

3. Responsibilities

As a parish staff member, the CYM will be responsible to:

- Attend regular staff meetings
- Participate in staff planning
- Communicate to staff about youth ministry activities
- Seek staff input in planning youth ministry activities
- Be a resource person to parish staff on issues related to youth and youth ministry
- Serve as the liaison with the pastor, parish staff and parish pastoral council

The parish youth ministry program integrates adolescent catechesis into a comprehensive ministry to, with, by and for young people. The CYM's responsibilities include:

- Facilitating the Youth Leadership Team, which is responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive youth ministry program
- Serving on the Youth Ministry Commission, which is an oversight group providing vision, direction, support, and advocacy for the parish ministry with youth
- Coordinating the recruitment, training, supporting and evaluating of volunteers in the youth ministry program
- Developing a systematic and intentional plan for evangelization and catechesis with and for adolescents that utilizes a creative variety of formats, settings and time frames
- Providing resources (print, video, archdiocesan events) for effective programming
- Ensuring the creation and maintenance of safe environments for all, including ensuring that parish youth ministry staff and volunteers are properly screened and supervised

- Providing appropriate training for the adults and young people in leadership positions
- Coordinating the Confirmation program
- Fostering the involvement of young people in the life of the parish, including serving on various parish committees and being involved in parish activities
- Coordinating the outreach to and evangelization of all young people in the parish
- Providing appropriate services and programs for parents of adolescents
- Advocating for a comprehensive vision of youth ministry
- Serving as the liaison with the arch/diocesan office of youth ministry and their programs, services and resources
- Participating in the diocesan and/or national association of professional youth ministers and in any local youth ministers' association

4. Relationships

- Pastor—immediate supervisor
- Parish Staff—offer close cooperation and communication, and seek staff involvement and input when appropriate
- Parish Pastoral Council—attend regular meetings and provide a youth ministry report
- Parish Finance Council—create a Youth Ministry budget and provide required updates and reports
- Parish Committees—communicate and collaborate with appropriate committees, such as, liturgy, social justice, religious education, etc.
- Youth Ministry Commission—offer close support and involvement
- Parents and Parishioners—provide regular communication and seek input as appropriate
- Diocesan Offices—provide regular communications, adherence to diocesan policies, participation in arch/diocesan professional organizations diocesan association of professional youth ministers

SAMPLE ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR DIOCESAN COORDINATOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

(based upon the description provided by the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface)

Diocesan Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Job Description
Title: Diocesan Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry
Department: Pastoral Services
Salary:
Supervisor:
<p>General Description:</p> <p>The Diocesan Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry works in collaboration with the Director of the Pastoral Centre in order to implement the diocesan pastoral and missionary guidelines. Pastoral ministry, whether diocesan, regional or parochial, among youth and young adults between 12 and 19 years of age, is part of the wider mission of the Church to go and make disciples (Mathew 28:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:4). It aims at helping today's young people, particularly those who are not Christians, to get to know Jesus Christ, to welcome him in their lives and to follow him as Lord and Saviour (2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 2:2; 3:18). The other goal is to develop the faith in young people and to encourage them to strengthen their commitment to serve their Church, their society and the world. Thus will be formed strong and mature missionary disciples able to reach out to others and to witness their love of God. The Diocesan Coordinator of Youth Ministry will accomplish his/her mission through the regions, the parishes and the organizations of the diocese. In fact, the role of the coordinator is similar to that of a trainer of leaders, a trainer of trainers (a master trainer). He/she finds and forms leaders who will lead youth ministries in their environment. The goal is to support parishes, Catholic groups and organizations, with their leaders, as they foster youth evangelization through youth, thus forming new generations of leaders. If there are no youth coordinators in a region or a parish, it is up to the diocesan coordinator to help them find one. Part of the work of the Diocesan Coordinator is to submit periodic reports to the Bishop and the Administration Council.</p>

Ways to accomplish this mission:

Diocesan events: with the collaboration of other pastoral youth coordinators, organize diocesan events for the youth.

Training: plan and set up training sessions for anyone who is involved in youth ministry.

Facilitation: call regular meetings of coordinators/leaders of youth ministry in parishes and pastoral regions.

Mentoring: support and encourage parish or regional youth leaders/facilitators to get them to manage their learning and then be able to maximize their potential and develop their skills.

Solidarity: take part in national associations of youth ministries.

Sharing: collect information and news about current initiatives in youth ministries and share this by way of a newsletter and other appropriate means of communication.

Communication: manage the youth and young adult ministry section of the diocesan website and use other means of communication.

Group work: form a committee for youth ministry and meet with it regularly. Work with a team of youth leaders formed to support the initiatives of the coordinator.

Qualifications

- Have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith and experience in Youth and Young Adult Ministry.
- Preferably have a university diploma in theology.
- Be fully in agreement with the thinking and the teaching of the Catholic Church.
- Be a permanent resident of Canada or a Canadian citizen.
- Make prayer an important part of your life and your work.
- Be interested and have experience in evangelization with people who do not believe in Christ.
- Have the spiritual renewal and experience formation of young people at heart.
- Have strong leadership skills, be able to organize, delegate, act as facilitator in groups and work cooperatively with teams.

Full-time Position

35 hours a week
5 days a week

Please include the names of three references, including that of your pastor.

Send resumé and application letter to:

Closing date for applications:

PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY EVALUATION TOOL

The greater the availability of religiously grounded relationships, activities, programs, opportunities, and challenges for teens, the more likely teens are to be religiously engaged and invested. “Religious congregations that prioritize ministry to youth and support for their parents, invest in trained and skilled youth group leaders, and make a serious effort to engage and teach adolescents seem much more likely to draw youth into their religious lives and to foster religious and spiritual maturity in their young members” (Dr. Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* [Oxford University Press, 2009], pp. 261–262). Scientific research has verified what many believed. Comprehensive youth ministry makes a significant difference, done in partnership with parents, in the context of a vibrant and welcoming faith community. Please use this parish youth ministry evaluation tool in order to assess and enliven your parish ministry with youth.

I. COORDINATOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

“Analysis shows that the presence of a full-time youth minister in the congregation, compared to no designated youth minister at all, significantly increases those teens’ (who attend on their own without parents) attendance” (Smith, pp. 113–114). However, the study found that only 21% of Catholic parishes employ full-time youth ministry leaders, compared with 30% for all denominations. The leading denominations with an institutional commitment to youth ministry and formation were the conservative Protestants, 44% of which have a full-time youth minister (p. 51).

With 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, assess your current youth ministry using the following questions.

1. The Parish/Cluster financially supports the Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM)
 - a. Salary commensurate with education and experience..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Salary in accord with diocesan guidelines 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Compensation given for conferences and professional growth..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Financial assistance for theology courses,
if person does not have a degree in theology 1 2 3 4 5

2. The CYM:
 - a. Seeks to enhance personal knowledge of the
Church’s doctrine and moral life 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Seeks opportunities for professional growth 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Seeks to enhance personal spiritual growth..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Maintains a balance in personal and professional life..... 1 2 3 4 5

3. The CYM strives to recruit and retain competent and
committed volunteer staff 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix F

4. The CYM provides and promotes learning opportunities for youth ministry leaders by:
 - a. Encouraging attendance at diocesan events 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Encouraging attendance at regional events and conferences 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Collaborating with other pastoral leadership in addressing religious issues and concerns 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Providing in-services or resources for youth ministry skills..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - e. Providing theological formation and understanding of Church teaching (e.g., in-services, speakers)..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - f. Familiarizing youth ministry leaders with pertinent legal procedures 1 2 3 4 5

5. The CYM is attentive to diverse cultures, languages, and family traditions. 1 2 3 4 5

6. The CYM has an in-depth knowledge of the Vision of youth ministry as described in *You Give Them Something to Eat*. 1 2 3 4 5

7. The CYM is made aware of and encouraged to seek diocesan certification..... 1 2 3 4 5

8. The CYM has a written job description. 1 2 3 4 5

9. The CYM receives a yearly evaluation that includes:
 - a. A self-evaluation tool 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Affirmation of strengths 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Opportunity for goal setting 1 2 3 4 5

10. The CYM is invited to staff meetings held on a regular basis. 1 2 3 4 5
 How often: Weekly_____ Monthly_____ Other_____

Parish Plan for Coordinator of Youth Ministry

1. What we are currently doing:
 - a. List those areas that are rated 3 or higher.
 - b. List those areas that are rated 2 or lower.
 - c. Of those rated 3 or lower, identify priorities for improvement.
 - d. Discuss options for addressing these areas.
 - e. Develop a five-year plan with steps and concrete targets to reach these goals.

II. A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE MINISTRY WITH ADOLESCENTS

In *You Give Them Something to Eat*, the Canadian Catholic Bishops offer a framework for Catholic youth ministry. This vision does not provide a program model or a prescriptive method for developing ministry. Rather, it offers a framework, a structure that has room for a variety of parishes to develop youth ministry in a variety of ways.

A. DEFINITION OF CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth ministry is the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community.

B. FOUR GOALS OF CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY

In *You Give Them Something to Eat*, four goals serve as directions for ministry with youth.

- Goal One: To call the Catholic faith community to continually renew its affective and effective option for young people
- Goal Two: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person
- Goal Three: To invite and empower young people to live as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
- Goal Four: To draw young people to participate responsibly in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community

Parish Plan for Goals of Youth Ministry

1. What we are currently doing:
 - a. List all programs for youth and determine which goals are addressed in these programs.
 - b. Which goal is addressed most often?
 - c. Which goal is addressed least often?
 - d. Of the goal appearing the least often, list priorities for improvement.
 - e. Discuss options for addressing these areas.
 - f. Develop a five-year plan with steps and concrete targets to reach all three goals.

III. THEMES OF EFFECTIVE YOUTH MINISTRY

A. DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE

1. Youth ministry responds to the needs of youth in accord with their age and developmental level. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Adults who work with youth are aware of the needs of adolescents..... 1 2 3 4 5

B. FAMILY-FRIENDLY

“The best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents do look like” (Smith, p. 261). The single most important influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.

1. Parents are engaged as partners in ministry with youth and are included in planning and evaluation of youth ministry efforts..... 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

2. Parents receive formation material that correlates with youth ministry formation 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

3. Opportunities are provided for parents and teens to come together 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

C. INTERGENERATIONAL

1. Opportunities are provided for interaction among different generations 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

D. MULTICULTURAL

1. Opportunities are provided for youth to grow in awareness of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

E. COMMUNITY-WIDE COLLABORATION

1. Youth ministry staff work with other community organizations for the benefit of youth 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

2. There is interaction between the parish staff and the school system..... 1 2 3 4 5

3. If there is a Catholic high school, parish ministry collaborates with the school in the formation of the youth 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

F. LEADERSHIP

1. Youth ministry encourages individuals from the faith community to become involved 1 2 3 4 5

2. Youth ministry allows for the varying time commitments and talents of the greater community 1 2 3 4 5

G. FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE PROGRAMMING

1. The busyness of people’s schedules
is taken into account in ministry planning 1 2 3 4 5

Parish Plan for Themes of Youth Ministry

1. What we are currently doing
 - a. List those areas that are rated 3 or higher.
 - b. List those areas that are rated 2 or lower.
 - c. Of those rated 2 or lower, identify priorities for improvement.
 - d. Discuss options for addressing these areas.
 - e. Develop a five-year plan with steps and concrete targets to reach these goals.

IV. ELEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH MINISTRY

It is critical that we not only catechize our youth but we effectively evangelize them, leading them to a deeper love for God that will in turn ignite a desire to grow in the understanding of their faith. Ministry without effective evangelization is pointless. Without effective catechesis, and other aspects of effective ministry with teens, it serves as momentary spiritual entertainment which does not initiate or sustain conversion. The elements are intentional relationships, advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship.

Reflection on several of the elements has been integrated into other portions of this assessment. Remaining elements are described below.

A. EVANGELIZATION

1. Which of the diocesan, regional and national programs designed to ignite the faith of youth do your youth participate in: _____
2. Describe local programs your parish/area offers for youth (e.g., overnight retreats, food fasts, service trips)

Comments and concerns over any part of Section A, Evangelization: _____

B. CATECHESIS

1. Catechesis is offered for grades 9-12 1 2 3 4 5
2. Scope and sequence of Church teaching
is understood and implemented 1 2 3 4 5
3. Catechetical knowledge translates into daily moral behaviour 1 2 3 4 5

Comments and concerns over any part of Section B, Catechesis: _____

C. INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. Adults are conscious of forming and nurturing relationships with young people1 2 3 4 5
2. The parish/cluster provides a variety of opportunities for adults and youth to meet and form relationships1 2 3 4 5
3. Youth and adults share stories1 2 3 4 5
4. Communication is open and transparent1 2 3 4 5
5. Reconciliation is practised and taught1 2 3 4 5

Comments and concerns over any part of Section C, Intentional Relationships: _____

D. ADVOCACY

1. Youth of the parish/cluster have the opportunity to evaluate the ministries that affect them 1 2 3 4 5
2. Youth are represented on other parish leadership and planning groups 1 2 3 4 5
Describe representation:
3. There is a paid parish staff member who advocates for ministry with, to, by and for youth 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

Comments and concerns over any part of Section D, Advocacy: _____

E SOCIAL JUSTICE & SERVICE

1. Social justice issues are addressed in the faith formation programs through:
 - a. Education 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Service activities 1 2 3 4 5
 Describe:
2. Outside resources are used in teaching social justice issues (e.g., speakers, videos, materials from particular groups) 1 2 3 4 5
List what you have found beneficial.
3. Youth have a voice in the planning of service opportunities through which their gifts can be utilized for the common good 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

Appendix F

4. Youth participate in:
- a. Visits to local nursing homes and homebound persons 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Assistance with the Confirmation program 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Group projects to benefit local or global ministry for the poor..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Service trips with adults of the parish or family members 1 2 3 4 5
 - e. Parish programming for younger children as mentors or aides 1 2 3 4 5
 - f. Other_____ 1 2 3 4 5
5. It is evident the parish community encourages youth of the parish to do acts of loving service for:
- a. Family members 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Peers 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Others 1 2 3 4 5
6. The faith formation program promotes family service activities.. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments or concerns over any part of Section E, Social Justice & Service:_____

F. COMMUNITY LIFE

1. Opportunities for community building and maintenance are offered for youth 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:
2. Do youth group meetings occur? ___weekly ___ monthly ___other
If other, please explain:
3. Youth are given opportunities to socialize and build relationships with one another and adult leaders 1 2 3 4 5
4. Youth gatherings provide opportunities for:
- a. Prayer and worship 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Scripture reflection 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Icebreakers or mixers 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Asking questions and sharing faith 1 2 3 4 5
 - e. Socialization and relationship building 1 2 3 4 5
5. Opportunities to explore teen issues in light of faith are provided..... 1 2 3 4 5
6. Opportunities for relationship building between youth and the parish community (service with other parish organizations, mentoring of youth in liturgical ministries, etc.) are provided 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

Comments and concerns over any part of Section F, Community Life:_____

G. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

1. Opportunities are provided for youth to give witness talks. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Leadership formation opportunities are provided for youth. 1 2 3 4 5

<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Training Overnight	<input type="checkbox"/> Diocesan Youth Leadership Camp
<input type="checkbox"/> Liturgical Training in Parish	<input type="checkbox"/> Catechist In-Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Core Group Leadership Retreats	<input type="checkbox"/> Training for Parish Ministries
Other _____	
3. A Youth Ministry Team, made up of youth and adults, is in place 1 2 3 4 5
4. Preparation or training is offered to adult and youth leaders to help them understand comprehensive youth ministry and how to share the Good News through positive relationships with teens 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

Comments and concerns over any part of Section G, Leadership Development: _____

H. PASTORAL CARE

1. Training is provided for peer ministry development 1 2 3 4 5

<input type="checkbox"/> Listening Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Relational Skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Management Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Faith-Sharing Skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral Skills
Other _____	
2. Training is offered for adult leaders so that they may respond to the needs of youth 1 2 3 4 5

<input type="checkbox"/> Listening Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Relational Skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Management Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Faith-Sharing Skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral Skills
Other _____	
3. Youth ministry personnel work with wider community agencies in providing direct aid to youth at risk 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:
4. Ministerial opportunities are offered to strengthen the family and parent/teen relationships 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:

5. Resources (e.g., discussions, materials) are provided for youth that are relevant to issues in their lives 1 2 3 4 5
- Comments and concerns over any part of Section H, Pastoral Care: _____

I. PRAYER AND WORSHIP

1. Prayer is incorporated whenever youth or families gather 1 2 3 4 5
2. Particular holy days/seasons of the Church year/saints days are:
 - a. Acknowledged through prayer 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Used as catechetical opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
3. Parents are invited to participate
in special prayer services throughout the year 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:
4. There are opportunities for students
to plan prayer services and liturgy 1 2 3 4 5
Describe:
5. In-service is provided for youth ministry leaders pertinent to:
 - a. Liturgy planning
 - b. Forms of prayer
 - c. Available resources
6. Youth ministry leaders are given opportunities to develop prayer planning skills.
Describe:
7. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated with the youth at least twice a year.

Comments and concerns over any part of Section I, Prayer and Worship: _____

Parish Plan for Elements of Youth Ministry

1. What we are currently doing:
 - a. List those areas that are rated 3 or higher.
 - b. List those areas that are rated 2 or lower.
 - c. Of those rated 2 or lower, identify priorities for improvement.
 - d. Discuss options for addressing these areas.
 - e. Develop a five-year plan with steps and concrete targets to reach these goals.

PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Compile a summary of your five-year plan from the previous sections and develop from those sections one comprehensive five-year plan listing items in order of priority and chronologically. Develop a plan of ongoing re-evaluation of your success in reaching these goals and new insights to apply to your implementation of your plan. Schedule as precisely as possible months of the year in which meetings for assessment will be set.

Source: Diocese of Lansing, MI (with adaptations)

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION

- What is your mission statement? Is it still up to date? How are you doing with regards to the purpose as defined in your mission statement?
- Is your vision statement still up to date? Do you see progress in achieving the dream you've worded here? What do you need to do or change to realize your vision?
- Where do you see God at work? How can you facilitate this?
- What are your strengths? How can you use these? (think of practical things like a strong worship team, good small-group leaders or an effective sports ministry)
- What are your weaknesses? (again, make it practical, like leadership shortage, low parent involvement, etc.)
- Are there any new opportunities that you can identify, such as a new area being built, a big event taking place (think of the Olympics, for instance) or a need that your youth ministry can address (think of a basketball court or help with homework)?
- Are there any threats, such as a new church coming to town, a false theology taking root, or problems in your church that affect attendance?
- What have been events that were well attended? Can you think of a reason why?
- Which events were poorly attended? Do you know why?
- What are the three biggest successes of the last five years? What were the main contributing factors?
- And the five biggest failures? Can you identify the causes?
- What are the biggest needs among your youth?
- Are there any big pastoral issues currently? What causes these?
- Where are we going?
- What do we want to see in our young people as a result of our youth ministry?
- What is our strategy for ministry and is it really workable?
- How can we develop a solid team of volunteers who have the same vision?
- How can we move beyond recreation and entertainment to a Christ-centred ministry?
- Where do youth and children's ministries fit into church growth strategy?
- What is the role of the church leadership and community for effective ministry?
- How should our ministries be aligned?
- Where are the gaps in our youth and children's ministry?
- Do we need a realignment of spiritual responsibility?
- What is the place of intergenerational relationships?
- How do we best transition and develop strategic flow?
- What is the place of training and support?

YOUTH MINISTRY PLANNING GRID

A TOOL FOR PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT FOR PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY

ELEMENTS	Youth		Family		Parish		School		Social Media & Technology		Civic Community	
	Gathered	Non-Gathered	Gathered	Non-Gathered	Gathered	Non-Gathered	Gathered	Non-Gathered	Gathered	Non-Gathered	Gathered	Non-Gathered
Evangelization												
Catechesis												
Intentional Relationships												
Advocacy												
Justice and Service												
Community Life												
Leadership Development												
Pastoral Care												
Prayer & Worship												