

Help Each Young Person Deeply Understand their Baptismal Faith



- Youth live as forgiven sinners with the promise of eternal life through Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Youth recognize the work of the Holy Spirit who brought them to faith, gathers them into God's family, and works through them.
- Youth regularly worship, study the living and active Word of God, pray together, and receive the Lord's Supper.
- Youth are provided with deliberate age specific opportunities to move toward key outcomes for young Lutheran Christians. (Examples are outlined in Youth Ministry Teaching End Goals.)

Helping youth to deeply understand their baptismal faith may seem simple, but it's far from easy. In Baptism, young people are given forgiveness of sins, new life and eternal life. A deep understanding of their baptismal faith is far more than a onetime event. It is central for a lifelong discipleship as teens experience new learning, expanding freedom, struggle and doubt.

A healthy youth ministry centers around young people as forgiven sinners with the promise of eternal life through Jesus' death and resurrection. It is the deep foundation for youth to apply God's Word to the ever-increasing complex baptized life. For youth in these times of new learning, expanding freedom, struggle and doubt, what can never be lost is the ultimate importance of Jesus' death and resurrection. It provides them a place of confidence, resting in God's Baptismal promises which are theirs for a lifetime.

Youth should recognize the work of the Holy Spirit who brought them to faith, gathers them into God's family, and works through them. **Each youth's baptismal identity makes them different than the world around them, light and salt in the world.** While this identity as a Child of God can be a challenge in our culture, it is also a great comfort and joy. They do not go alone. Through the gift of faith, they are gathered into a community around the cross of Jesus.

The work of the Holy Spirit gives them what they need to stand strong and share the Gospel with those around them. Their ability to share their baptismal faith is critical as Generation Z has more Nones (those who do not ascribe to any religious belief) than any generation. The teen years are critical to the retention of young people in the church and faith. Engagement in the wider congregation and age specific youth ministry are both ways the Holy Spirit works throughout a young person's life.

Youth should regularly worship, study the living and active Word of God, pray together, and receive the Lord's Supper. While youth specific ministry is beneficial, all young people should be encouraged to be in God's Word and Sacrament given in worship. Young people will struggle with sin, guilt and self-justification. It is through God's good gifts to us that we receive and deeply understanding our forgiveness through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Healthy youth ministry instills in youth the desire to understand and study God's living Word. Scripture is not just another source of information but the source of God's living Word to us. Technology provides many with instant access to information, ads, and data from the moment they wake up until they go to sleep. Youth need a lens through which to process and understand all the information given to them. Amongst all the voices and information, parents and the church can train young people to listen to Jesus' voice above all the chatter.

Youth are provided with deliberate age specific opportunities to move toward key outcomes for young Lutheran Christians. Every youth ministry can seek to send their teens out equipped with vital practices, skills, and knowledge given through the Holy Spirit. We can see these outlined in the 40 Teaching End Goals. These End Goals are designed to move youth from Confirmation towards a deep understanding of their faith which will guide them as lifelong disciples. While they are not comprehensive, nor do they seek to limit what youth should learn in youth ministry, they are helpful goals for youth ministry practitioners and parents to consider.

In the 30+ years of LYF Poll data, the number of responses of "I Don't Know" has increased tremendously on key issues. Young people are facing challenges to the Baptismal faith in ways different than previous generations. Every youth ministry can seek to send their teens out equipped with vital practices, skills, and knowledge given through the Holy Spirit. **Deeply understanding their Baptismal faith is deep foundation for youth in their every-increasing complexities of life.**

Discussion Questions

For Youth Leaders

- How can you model regular Scripture reading, worship, and prayer for teens in your life?
- How can you help remind teens of their baptismal identity?

For Youth Ministry Teams

- How does your youth ministry build on what is taught in the Confirmation process?
- How does youth ministry empower teens to be self-directed learners and resource teens to bring faith into everyday life?
- Look at the Youth Ministry Teaching End Goals. Which of these areas do you teach well? What could use additional focus?

For Congregational Leadership

- Does your congregation have a comprehensive educational plan and goals for young people from Baptism to graduation from high school? How often do you review such a plan?
- Do you resource parents and other youth ministry leaders to communicate God's truths to young people? Do you train parents and others to access additional resources when immediate answers to questions may be unknown?
- How does your congregation record a teen's worship attendance? How do you follow up with teens and their families who haven't been in worship?