

7 PRACTICES of Healthy Youth Ministry

LCMS YOUTH MINISTRY HAS SPENT SIGNIFICANT TIME in the past five to 10 years listening, reading data, conducting research and digging into Scripture to find out what is key for healthy congregational youth ministry. Unsurprisingly, our conclusions continually centered around relationships: God's relationship with us, parents' relationships with their children, congregations' relationship to their youth,

and the youth's relationship with key adults. Whether you are a parent, pastor, commissioned minister, church staff member or volunteer, we hope you find this material helpful. While the practices described here may not cover every facet of ministry or teaching in your church's context, we do hope it provides support, direction and inspiration for you and for any congregation.

Congregations 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.)



Develop a Resilient Identity in Christ

- Resilient youth identify with the life and mission of the Christian church and seek to serve others.
- Resilient youth remain humbly confident in their faith in the face of crisis and transition.
- Resilient youth can build relationships with those different than themselves and navigate disagreements in a humble, loving way.
- Resilient youth are lifelong learners who face doubt and challenge by turning to God's Word.



Live Out Their Unique Vocation

- Youth understand their role as Christ's hands and feet in their church, home, community and other areas of vocation.
- Youth reach out to their neighbor in word and deed to love and share the Good News of Jesus.
- Youth serve and lead in their congregation and community.
- Youth seek to be warm, challenging and grace-filled to their community and peers.
- Youth are encouraged to pursue church work vocations as it fits their gifts and skills.



Congregations have...

Warmth, Challenge and Grace

- Congregations foster an open and honest environment where youth share joys, questions, crisis and doubt, knowing God's Word will be spoken in love.
- Congregations share personal stories of grace, failure, challenge and joy.
- Congregations are willing to engage in tough spiritual conversations.
- Congregations have a dedicated, developmentally appropriate space for youth where they grow as disciples with their peers.



Supportive Adults

- Supportive congregations seek to connect every youth with at least five engaged Christian adults.
- Supportive adults deliberately invest and value long-term, intergenerational relationships.
- Supportive adults prepare for and respond to celebration, transitions and crisis.
- Supportive congregations seek have adults who champion young people and dedicate time and energy to developing teens as disciples of Jesus Christ for life.



Engaged Parents

- Engaged parents prioritize faith development by encouraging daily faith practices especially during times of transition.
- Engaged parents invest in the lives of their children by understanding their child's vocation and the culture around them.
- Engaged parents participate in worship, personal spiritual practices and service.
- Supportive congregations provide parents encouragement and support from other Christian adults.



Opportunities to Serve and Lead

- Congregations identify gifts and skills in youth that can be used in service, leadership and vocation inside and outside the church.
- Congregations invest in youth by providing consistent opportunities for meaningful contributions.
- Congregations engage and support youth in service inside the congregation, in the community and beyond.
- Congregations empower young people to be load-bearing leaders by providing training, mentors and space to learn.

