

*Congregations Have*

# 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.

Healthy youth ministry extends past the congregation into the home and back. Parents are gifted with the role of primary instructor and example for their children in the Christian faith. Deuteronomy 6:7–8 says, “You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Healthy youth ministry embraces scripture, and points to parents as a critical component in the faith lives of young people. Parents aren't on their own. Congregations can come beside parents equipping them with tools and support in their vocation.

Not every family looks the same, nor does every family have two faithful Christian parents. While we talk about parents, we know guardians, step-parents, extended family, and other adults may step in as an engaged parent. We know God can work in and through any person who takes on this critical role in a young person's life. Congregations should be prepared to support and engage families in whatever form they take.

Engaged parents prioritize faith development by encouraging daily faith practices, especially during times of transition. Today's busy families are constantly forced to make difficult decisions to prioritize their schedule and resources.

Congregational ministry can either take an adversarial role against other activities or it can work alongside parents to support faithfully setting priorities and fostering faith growth wherever they are. By teaching Christ-centered priorities in the home, young people learn to set similar priorities during life's transitions as they grow and become independent.

Engaged parents invest in the lives of their children by understanding their child's vocation and the culture around them. Engaged parents do not need to be cultural experts, but they should understand the influences on their child's life. From sports to phone apps, parents and guardians should know how their young people are spending their time and the messages they are hearing. Parents can connect with their children around things that give them joy and should be active listeners and learners around their child's interests and gifts.

Data from LCMS Youth Ministry, Lutheran Hour Ministries, and Barna all show that young people are more likely to be retained in the church when they report having a good relationship with parents where they could discuss questions of life and faith. Parents and guardians walk alongside young people as they live out their vocations and as their lives and roles change. At each stage of life, they can guide their child as God develops life-long disciples.

Engaged parents participate in worship, personal spiritual practices, and service, even after their children have become adults. LCMS Youth Ministry's research found today's active LCMS young adults likely saw and continue to see today a high level of faith practiced by their parents. Whether parent, guardian, grandparent or other family structure, youth will tend to emulate worship and congregational involvement of adults in their lives.

Congregations have a role in encouraging and supporting all parents and guardians to actively engage in their children's faith lives. Parents and guardians can find support from older adults and other parents who are also Christ-centered. Congregations can provide training and communication to parents as they seek to raise faithful youth. Knowing how powerful the example can be, congregations can assist parents in attending worship, Bible study, and even making opportunities to serve and lead accessible.

## Discussion Questions

### *For Individuals*

- How do you help support parent(s) in their vocation as primary faith teacher?
- How have you seen parents have an impact on the faith lives of youth?
- Do you know parents/guardians/other family who may need extra support and encouragement? How can you help them in their vocation?

### *For Youth Ministry Teams*

- Does your youth ministry communicate to parents that they are the primary instructor and example for their children?
- How do you talk about and engage parents as partners with the same goals for young people?
- How does your youth ministry help train and empower adults to have faith conversations, including questions and doubts, at home?
- How does your youth ministry work with parents to understand each child's unique vocation?

### *For Congregational Leadership*

- How does your congregation impress on parents the importance of their own faith life, worship, and leadership on their children?
- How does your congregation help parents understand the spiritual, mental, and emotional development of their child through different ages and life circumstances?
- How does your congregation support adult discipleship and facilitate opportunities for them to serve and lead within the church?