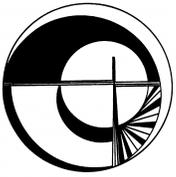


**The Journey to
Adulthood
OVERVIEW**

J2A



LeaderResources

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Dear Friend:

Thank you for your interest in the *Journey to Adulthood*. This innovative relational youth program focuses on building authentic spiritual communities where ministry can happen to, for and with the young people in your church.

In this packet you will find some of the foundational background scriptures and reading material that will hopefully give you a taste for what makes *Journey to Adulthood (J2A)* so unique.

You can find most of this same information from our website at www.LeaderResources.org. Just look for “*Journey to Adulthood*” listed on the left hand side. Then go to the “Intro and Overview” page and scroll down to the bottom. There you will find the links for several more information about this program.

Take a look at the materials and please feel free to contact us with any questions you might have about the possibility of using this exciting program in your church.

Hope to talk to you soon!

PS – We have professional trainers who can come help you! Call us for more info!

Overview of the Journey to Adulthood (J2A)

A transformational way to do youth ministry

So, you want to know about Journey to Adulthood? What is it? Why is it so different from traditional youth curriculum? Well, first of all – the program structure is different. There are three sections of the Journey to Adulthood program: Rite 13, J2A and YAC. Each section of the program lasts for two years and that two-year grouping of teens will stay together until they graduate from high school, with no other class being added in. This stability of group dynamics helps create safe, sacred space where the group members can learn to trust themselves and each other as they grow in faith.

R13 The first two years of the program is called **RITE 13**, a name that comes from a liturgical rite of passage we celebrate with young people around their 13th birthday. This rite is loosely based on the Jewish bar/bat mitzvah tradition and is a way for the entire congregation to celebrate the unique gifts and abilities of its young teens. The two years of Rite 13 focus on recognizing the gifts God has given us, celebrating our creative potential, and learning to interact as a community of faith.

J2A The second segment is J2A, an acronym for **JOURNEY TO ADULTHOOD**. It is a little confusing since the name of this segment has the same name as the entire program, but the reason for this is that the bulk of the work gets done in these two years, building on the foundation of the Rite 13 experience. During these years, teens learn and practice six basic skills of adulthood: active listening, negotiation, assertion, research & information management, partnership and leadership. The end of the second year of J2A is marked by the group designing and going on a Holy Pilgrimage.

YAC The last two years of the Journey to Adulthood program are referred to as YAC, which stands for **YOUNG ADULTS IN CHURCH**. YAC students are encouraged to accept more adult responsibilities and to contribute their time, talent and treasure in ways that support the ongoing work of the church. Teens write a personal credo of beliefs and rely on their trusted group of peers as they explore their faith more deeply and struggle with the details of transitioning from teenager to young adult in today's world.

The Journey to Adulthood experience incorporates much learning and laughter, but it takes our young people seriously and gives them real work to do. The program is based on the key concept that “Manhood and Womanhood are gifts from God, but Adulthood must be earned.” It encourages teens to explore the four areas of Self, Spirituality, Sexuality and Society, and learn to connect their faith to all areas of life. It is our hope that this program fosters an environment of wholeness and authenticity and helps teens develop a life-changing relationship with the God who created them.

This journey has the potential to transform not just your youth group, but your entire church. The program uses the collective wisdom of adults in your church to beckon young people into responsible, faithful adulthood. It calls the entire congregation into a deeper relationship with their young people and it calls each one of us – whatever our age – to think about the gifts we have been given. When we find ways to use our gifts to be God's presence in the world, we can ALL be changed in very powerful ways.

*Come join us on this journey –
you'll be glad you did!*

*** This passage from Luke is one of the guiding scriptures for our program and was especially important for the Rite-13 ceremony that happens for new adolescents ***

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went to Jerusalem to search for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him they were astonished: and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them.

Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

(Luke 2:41-52 NRSV)

Excerpts from the Travel Guide
Introducing *The Journey to Adulthood*

Images We Hold Shape the Theology We Believe

Every image of Jesus Christ that we carry in our hearts and minds offers to us an insight into our own understanding of God and God's loving call to us. When we see Jesus as a teacher, standing on the hillside at the Sea of Galilee, surrounded by his followers, we are reminded of God's wisdom and God's invitation to us to study, listen, and reflect on the living Word of God. When we imagine Jesus as the friend who comes to share a meal with family and neighbors, we are invited to ponder the gift of the Eucharist, of bread and wine made into the Body and Blood of new and unending life in God. When we remember Jesus as healer, we can begin to call upon him to heal us and make us whole. And when we see Jesus as an infant, wrapped in a bundle, held close to the heart, we are reminded once more of the wonder of new life, the miracle of redemption that comes to us not only through death on the cross but also comes at birth, with joy and songs and innocent anticipation. As we expand our images, always informed by the heritage of our tradition and the Scriptures, we expand our understanding. So, what will happen when we imagine Jesus as an opinionated, awkward, difficult, delightful, probing, engaging teenager? What will we learn from that?

Jesus as a Teenager

There is only one story in the whole New Testament about Jesus as a teenager. It is a story familiar to most of us and can be found in Luke (2:11-52). At the time of the festival Jesus and his family, friends, and relatives went up to Jerusalem. The Scripture says that they went "as usual," "as was their custom." Perhaps it isn't easy for us to imagine Jerusalem two thousand years ago, but we know a few things that might help us to construct the image. Jerusalem is a walled city. It has a distinct boundary. It sits atop a set of hills. Because Jesus and his parents had been there before, it is probably safe to assume that by age twelve Jesus knew his way around the city well enough to be trusted to wander a bit. The whole story is reminiscent of going to the State Fair every year, year after year. We go because we want to celebrate, walk around and look at the people, see the farm animals, and ride the rides. It is relatively safe. A fence surrounds the perimeter of the grounds. I can give my own teenage children a little spending money and send them on their way. The mood and the feeling in Jerusalem at the festival must have been a lot like the mood of our fairs. We attend in groups, by clan, with lots of friends and relatives and family, all together. We watch out for one another and share the responsibility of caring for each other and each other's children. We can let our teenage sons and daughters slip from sight because we are there with a whole group of people, and all agree to keep an eye on each other. It is easy to imagine Mary giving her son a few coins, sending him on his way, reminding him to meet her at the Beautiful Gate at the end of the day, and shouting behind him as he wanders off into the crowds, "Be careful. Have fun." He disappears from sight without looking back.

It is not hard to imagine losing him, either. Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem without Jesus not because they were careless or he was deceitful. They must have asked their friends a hundred times, "Have you seen Jesus?" And each time, a friend answers, "I think so. He's with Martha, isn't he?" or "I think I saw him with the other boys up ahead of us."

We can imagine that after a full day of walking, Mary and Joseph suddenly realized that Jesus wasn't with them, that they had not seen him all day. It begins as that silence in the heart, a silence only parents can hear. It is almost as if they are listening for the very breath of their son, and they cannot hear him in

the crowd. Anyone who has ever lost a child in a mall or a shopping center, or even in their own neighborhood for more than a few minutes, knows that silence. It is deafening and frightful.

We imagine their concern, their worry, the anger and then the worry again, and the silence. It would be like our arriving at home after a full day at the Fair, having been assured for the last hours that our child was in so-and-so's car, "He's certain to be at home when you get there." Even, "Oh, he's a good kid—he knows the rules." But when we get home, the house is dark. There is no sign of our son or our daughter. There are no messages on the answering machine. Like Mary and Joseph, we would have to make our way back to the walled city and begin to look for him. But where would we look? Where did Mary and Joseph look?

Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to search for Jesus. They didn't know where to look. The story says that they looked for three days. Three is one of the numbers in the Bible that has a special meaning, like forty, like seven. If nothing else these numbers signify a complete unit of time. We might even say that Mary and Joseph looked everywhere for Jesus and finally found him in the last place they looked. They found him in the Temple. Perhaps they went to the Temple, not because they expected to find him there, but rather, to offer prayers to God for his safety. Either way, when they find him, he is seated among the elders. From across the way, Mary and Joseph may have heard his voice again, a whisper in that silence in their hearts. At once, they probably felt both relief and rage. Who could blame them? They were tired and frustrated and glad and angry. Had any one of us been Mary, we would not have been in a very good mood. No matter how engaging the elders found our son to be, we would still be cross. Honestly, the very fact that he was amazing his elders with his questions and answers, with his understanding would have only made it worse. We had been worrying; he had been probing the Torah.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Mary would ask Jesus how he could have treated his parents this way. "How could you?" she asks. "Didn't you know your father and I were worried about you?"

No matter what else we may believe about the stories in the Bible, they are still such wonderful stories, so beautifully crafted. Listen to what Mary says, and listen to Jesus' answer. "Child," she says, "why have you treated us this way? Your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." And Jesus answers, "Why have you been searching for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my father's house?" And the Scripture goes on to say that they didn't understand what he said to them.

So many things about this exchange catch our attention. On the one hand, it is almost funny. After all, didn't Mary and Joseph remember that the birth of this son was attended by angels and rejoicing and dreams and visions? Had they forgotten everything they knew about Jesus at his birth? Had they forgotten that he was the Messiah, the Son of God? Perhaps. By the time our children are teenagers, many of us have forgotten everything, every good thing we knew about them on the day they were born. It is not just our teenagers who are forgetful and preoccupied. It is us as well. Something dramatic and often drastic has to happen to remind us of what we once knew about who they are and who they must become as adults. And another thing: Parents and child are all speaking the very same language and even using the same words, and still they do not understand one another. Both Mary and Jesus refer to the father, but they each mean something different, something true to their individual context of life. How often does this sort of miscommunication happen in our own homes, with our own teens? "I thought you said..." we say. "But you said..." they reply.

This story of Jesus as a teenager isn't a weird story about a weird young man. It is the story of every teenager and every parent of a teenager. We all know exactly what Mary and Joseph went through, and if we stop long enough to remember, we all know what Jesus experienced as well.

Each and every one of us carries a memory tucked away somewhere close to the heart of the first time someone, somewhere, took us seriously, and gave us enough time to amaze and astonish them with our questions and our insights. Just as Mary and Joseph spent a complete unit of time looking for Jesus, so Jesus and the elders spent a complete unit of time together—enough time to allow for the real work of formation and education to occur.

Anyone who works with teenagers in any setting knows that it takes time, and it takes presence. We, as the elders, must be willing to sit and remain long enough with the young people in our care if we are to find them and if they are to find themselves. Perhaps it is too much to read into the story, but it may well be that these days in the temple were the first days when Jesus began to understand who he was, separate from his parents. Perhaps it was a new revelation that allowed him to say Father and mean God. Every young person is entitled to three days in the Temple in which to discover who they are and to have that revelation celebrated, held up and honored by the elders.

Why aren't teens in church?

So why are our churches so empty of teenagers? Why, if every young man and young woman needs a place to stay, to consider God's action in the world, as well as the very particular calling God has for their lives—why aren't they in church with us, week after week? There are probably many answers to that question, all of which deserve our attention. But for the sake of this introduction, let's focus on just a few.

The Church Cycle

There is a predictable cycle to the entrance, exit, and re-entrance of individuals in the Church. Perhaps this is true in other traditions as well, but it is certainly the case in the Episcopal tradition.

Baptism

The entrance point for members of the Church is Baptism. Baptism is the full and complete initiation into the Body of Christ. When our children are very small—infants—we baptize them. The community welcomes them into the Body of Christ without so much as a second thought to the commitments and promises made for them and to them as they are baptized. It is easy for us to say that we will love and uphold and train them when they are small and sweet and cuddly. We celebrate a new member and rejoice in God's call to us to care for that child.

And we do. We build beautiful nurseries and early Sunday School classrooms. We do a pretty good job of making the church a safe and welcoming place for our young children. Crayons and coloring sheets. Cookies and juice. Kind and smiling teachers. But something happens around the fifth grade. One morning, that little one comes to the breakfast table and announces that Sunday School sucks and their Sunday School teacher is stupid. It may not be pretty language, or even appropriate, but it is what they say. Whether Mom or Dad makes that child go to church that morning is not really the point. What matters is the long-term response. Sometime within the next six months to a year, the parent of that child will call the clergy of the parish and say, "It's time to confirm my child. We have to do it now, before we lose her."

Confirmation

Of course, we can't really lose her. Baptism has made her a permanent member of the community of faith, whether she participates regularly or not. But we want more than token membership for our children. We want full participation for as long as possible, and we want to be sure that our children "join the church" in Confirmation or another ritual pledging of faith.

So what happens next? We lock our young people into a rigorous preparation program with their peers. They meet for a year or six months or six weeks. We make them memorize all sorts of things that are unlikely an adult convert would be asked to memorize. Consistently, youth Confirmation programs are far more demanding and exacting than their adult counterparts. Part of the reason is our sense that as soon as they are confirmed, as soon as the clergyperson appears to lay hands on their heads, they will make their exit for a while. We want to be sure we teach them everything we can before they leave us. It is a last-ditch effort at early faith formation.

Exodus

And we are mostly right. With the exception of one or two young people who stay active in the acolyte program, especially if it is set up in a hierarchy, and a few others who become active at the judicatory level, most of our young people will be gone from our Sunday education hour, our worship, our church, within two years of Confirmation.

So invested are we in this exodus that we even say it is a good thing. Everyone needs a time of questioning. We say The Church will be here when they get back. We even say it's healthy for young people to leave the Church for a while. They need a chance to experiment, seek other possibilities, and then come back when they're ready. Young people take their cues from the adults around them. We whisper that it is good and necessary for them to leave for a while, and sure enough, they do.

The young person leaves the Church at fourteen or fifteen. They leave at the very time in life when they are experiencing the most profound changes in their hearts, minds and bodies that they will ever experience in all their lives. And where do they go? They go into their teenage years. They travel through adolescence and early adulthood without the support and guidance and encouragement of the elders in the Temple.

Their Time Away

What happens to them while they are away? They go to high school. They get their driver's licenses. They choose colleges and careers. They change the way they dress and talk and laugh and look. They are likely to fall in love for the first and second and third time, and we are not there to talk to them about Christian love, covenantal love. Meanwhile, they are likely to have their first sexual experiences. They are likely to experiment with alcohol and illegal drugs. We are not there; we have no access to them to talk about the consequences. They are asking all sorts of questions based on all sorts of ideas that they have never considered before. They are asking about an ideal world, an ideal life, an ideal partner, an ideal God. We are not there to tell them about the Kingdom of God, a kingdom based on love, justice, equality. All the while, they are literally bombarded with ideas and books and images and questions from an active popular culture which is increasingly secular in its sensibility. It may be too romantic a notion to look back and think that once upon a time there was a Christian culture in America. That may merely be nostalgia. But the very scope and scale of our culture, the culture in which our children mature, does allow a kind of autonomy from the elders that has never been available to us before. We can live and learn and struggle with life's lessons for years and years outside the context of a community

of faith, bombarded by media that basically inform us that we can have what we want, whenever we want it, with virtually no consequences. Nowhere in the popular culture will our young people hear a voice calling them into a living relationship with God in Christ Jesus. They will not hear that a life lived in response to God's call to holiness and responsibility is a life of joy and satisfaction. The culture shouts that joy and satisfaction come from the acquisition of goods and experiences. Buy more, be more, do more, live more. The popular culture will not speak to them the words of faith, humility and obedience.

Their Return

When will they come back to us, if they come back at all? When they decide to marry. They will bring to the clergy person's office a vivid memory of the sanctuary on Easter or Christmas. That's what they want their wedding to look like. And we do it to them again. We lock them away for pre-marriage training, tell them it will be meaningful. The clergy person lays hands on their heads and blesses their union, and they are off again. They will, more than likely, struggle through the first years of marriage alone, until they return, finally, after the birth of their baby, for Baptism. Their child is baptized, we make the same promises and the cycle starts all over again.

We have come full circle, and in the interim, lost years of dialogue and formation. Not only have we lost access to them in order that we might help them establish their lives in Christ, thereby fulfilling our part of the Baptismal Covenant to them, but we have also lost access to the richness of their enthusiasm, their questions, their insights. The community of faith is not complete without the teenage voice. We have lost the chance to be astonished as the elders were with Jesus two thousand years ago....

Our Response

By our silence, we have given our consent. We have allowed the process of faith formation and personal development to be relocated to the public sector. Were we to lose our children at the State Fair, we would be far more likely to find them hanging out somewhere with other teenagers, or in some school-affiliated booth, than we would be to find them in the Episcopal Church booth. We would not find them seated with the elders of faith. It is absolutely time that we bring that work home to the Church, where it belongs. We must welcome our young people back into the Temple and assure them that we will be there with them for as long as it takes to find the truth of God in Christ Jesus—*together*. It is absolutely true that unless we begin to look directly into the eyes and hearts and lives of our young people at this holy time of life, someone else will do it for us. It may be TV or movies or music or gangs or peer groups or math teachers—all of whom may have something worthwhile to offer in the mix—but we, as God's Church, the Body of Christ in the world, have a moral responsibility to turn our attention to the needs and concerns of our youth. We have to do this work because God is calling us to. The most important work we can do in the world is to entrust to others the faith which has been entrusted to us. We do not have to be great spiritual leaders or mystics or shamans in order to do this work, only faithful and willing. We have to do it.

Not only do we have to, but we are remarkably well-equipped for it. We as the Church are the last intergenerational institution in America. The young and the old come together for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ. The richness of experience, insight, practice, and expertise in every parish is sufficient to meet their needs. Not only that, but we have common beliefs and shared values in the creeds and covenants of our faith tradition. Despite the dialogue and controversy surrounding so many issues and questions in the Church at this time, still we stand together week in and week out and affirm the basic tenets of the faith. And we, in love, do our best to maintain the dialogue when we disagree. Because we are the Body of Christ, we are committed to staying in relationship with one

another. Because we believe in the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus, we value and respect the dignity of every human being. Because we have been handed down a tradition of faith available in the Scriptures, our books of worship, and the shared experience of our membership, we have the tools in place to begin this work.

God is calling us to get brave, to look our young people in the eye, and with dedication, love and commitment, begin to tell the truth as best we can. The truth about God in Christ Jesus. The truth about the joys and sorrows of living in relationship. The truth about hard work and sacrifice. The truth about love. While no one of us has all the answers for all our young people, collectively we can give them the faith and hope that was entrusted to us.

The Creation of *The Journey to Adulthood*

It was with all of this in mind that a group of parishioners came together in 1984 to see what alternatives might be available to young people. The first thing that they did was to examine the sacramental rite of Confirmation as a meaningful rite of passage. What they discovered was that Confirmation is an important and necessary piece of faith formation, but it is not, nor was it ever intended to be, a coming of age ritual. It was never meant to fulfill the requirements of a true rite of passage, and it ought not be the exit ritual it has become for so many young people.

After much study and prayer, the group came up with the two basic precepts which would help define the tasks inherent in the *Journey to Adulthood*.

- II Manhood and Womanhood are free gifts from God.
- II Adulthood must be earned.

Manhood and Womanhood as gifts from a loving God may seem obvious to many of us. After all, we read in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” And more than that, God blessed them. Our gender—this wondrous gift from God—is an integral part of our blessed relationship with each other and with God.

When we are given gifts, whether on birthdays or Christmas, the appropriate response is gratitude and right use. We ought to celebrate, give thanks, and learn how to use that which we have been given. The problem is that for all too many young people, and perhaps for adults as well, there is a misconception that drives us to prove gender, to earn it by cultural edicts on what it means to “be a man” or “be a woman.” Think of what it is like in a high school: Who are the real men? The real women? Jocks and cheerleaders. They are held up as the norm, the goal, and young people spend tremendous amounts of energy emulating certain behaviors which are deemed manly or womanly by their popular culture. Boys form gangs, they fight, they get strong and powerful, they drive cars too fast, consume too much alcohol, have sexual intercourse with as many partners as possible, because that is what it takes to be a man. It is, of course, a lie. And a destructive one at that. Manhood comes freely from the hand of God to empower individuals to the work of God in the world.

Females have their own ways of proving their gender. They primp and preen, they diet to be smaller and more diminutive. Even with the help of new awareness, far too many young women still grow quiet in the classroom, pull away from mathematics because “real women aren’t good at math.” And, of course, the best way to prove that someone is a real woman, other than being a cheerleader for a team of real men, is to bear a baby. It is a gender-specific behavior. There is no way that you can walk around nine months’ pregnant and be mistaken for something other than a woman.

But these gender-proving behaviors are based on a lie. Nothing that goes on in the body of a woman is a curse. Menstruation is a blessing. It is a reminder that procreative energy moves within the body of this young woman. And no man is victimized by his hormones. He can stop if he wants to. God has given to him the necessary hormones in order to remind him that he has within him all the procreative energy he needs. For both men and women, that energy is given not merely for the creation of babies, but for the strength and courage to work with God in the creation of a world which functions according to God's principles. Denying the power of that procreative energy is like trying to get the genie back into the bottle. It is far and away a better idea to celebrate the power, and teach young people how to use that power responsibly. We can teach them how to work for justice, build for peace, stand side by side with their brothers and sisters, join hands for meaningful and purposeful work rather than take cold showers, exercise, and practice abstinence. There is no question that young people should refrain from any sexual activity that is merely hormone-driven.

Manhood and Womanhood vs. Adulthood

One way to invite them to embrace this responsibility is to set before them the true tasks of competency, mastery and responsibility: to say to them, liturgically, in the context of the whole faith community, *we know what is happening to you and to your body and we are going to celebrate it all. In addition, we are going to show you how to become adults. Adulthood is something more than merely being man or woman. Adulthood is the status given to you by the community when we are certain that you have the basic skills and commitments necessary to take responsibility for yourself and those whom God sets in your path.*

While manhood and womanhood are freely given, adulthood must be earned and proven. Adulthood is skills-based, requiring the acquisition and demonstration of certain skills in order to earn the new status in the community.

In other cultures, adulthood is proven when, for example, a boy kills his first game or other predator in order to provide for or protect his people. For girls, it may mean learning to sew thirteen quilting stitches to the inch as a skill necessary to make bedclothes, but also as a proof of her ability to care for and provide for her family. Sometimes in our society adulthood is proven by the graduation from high school or college, the acquisition of a driver's license, registering to vote, becoming economically independent, or even serving in the military.

In *The Journey to Adulthood*, the emphasis is placed on both celebration and responsibility, on what we have been freely given and what we must earn. The balance is present throughout the Scriptures. We are freely given salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; but we must also work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We have been freely given gifts and abilities by the indwelling Christ and the Holy Spirit, but we must conform ourselves to the nature of God and apply those gifts to God's purposes. With Jesus as our model, we learn the path of humility, sacrifice, service, and joy, while we celebrate the amazing love and incarnation of God in our relationships with God's spirit and God's people.

The Origin of the Program

The *Journey to Adulthood* has always been a collaborative program and there are lots of people responsible for its development. J2A began in the mid-1980s by the parish of St. Philip's in Durham, NC during the tenure of the Rev. Thomas Midyette. The members of St. Philip's began discussing a new approach to youth ministry and discovered William Robert's book, *The Initiation to Adulthood*, as a

valuable guide. Amanda Smith did much of the original research and created the guiding principles of this program and then a grant from the Episcopal Church Foundation enabled St. Philip's to hire David Crean and Amanda Millay Hughes to write the program in a form that could be used by others.

In 1995, the 300-page program was given to LeaderResources to publish. At first, the program was distributed only to Episcopal congregations, but now the program (which has grown to over 1200 pages!) is used by more than 1500 congregations in many different denominations around the world. LeaderResources still edits and publishes the J2A program and continues to work on upgrades and new material contributed by many different people.

The Structure of the Program

The program is a six-year program, divided into three two-year components:

Rite-13 (a name based on a liturgical celebration integral to the program) celebrates the gift of gender and provides a foundation for the remainder of the program.

J2A (Journey to Adulthood) builds on Rite-13 by training young people in six necessary skills of adulthood: Listening, Assertion, Negotiation, Research and Information Management, Partnership and Leadership

YAC (Young Adults in the Church) builds on the previous four years of the program by enabling the young people to practice their newly-acquired skills in the context of the supportive parish community.

The Four Areas

Each segment of the program has in common a systematic focus on all the aspects of a whole person. **Self, Society, Sexuality and Spirituality** are the areas which are covered in depth, in the light of the Gospel, in order that the reality of young people's lives can be strengthened, encouraged, healed, corrected, and empowered by the life and wisdom of Jesus Christ. Jesus is again our model for these four areas. At the end of the gospel story of Jesus in the temple, we read, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor." The life of Jesus is a life of balance, in which no province of human experience is exempt from the love and instruction of God.

The program takes seriously the need to deal with what is real for young people, to honor their questions, to assure them that they are real people with real, valid and authentic experiences; and we undertake to place a scriptural, spiritual, and liturgical frame around each and every one of those experiences. To do less than that is to imply that God is only interested in our piety or in our ability to participate in certain rituals. God is absolutely interested in every aspect of human life. That is one reason for the Incarnation: to remind us all, time and time again, of God's presence in the mundane and the sublime, in our speech and in our silence, in our understanding and our misunderstanding. By entering into a dialogue with young people about all of their concerns, and by offering to them the instruction of faith, as best we can, we seek to show these youngsters, in the words of the Collect for Young Persons, "That your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals." (From the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, page 829)

We seek to integrate these four aspects of being human into a harmonious whole. The secular world virtually ignores spirituality while placing undue emphasis on sexuality. The Church virtually ignores sexuality, except for its mandate that we refrain from sexual behaviors outside the context of committed, monogamous relationships blessed by the Church. If we look at the self in isolation, rather than as a part of the Body of Christ, we miss God's calling to wholeness and interdependence. And if we consider societal needs and social action without considering the implications of our spirituality, we miss the chance to see that all of God's actions in history have been on behalf of the poor, the downcast, the disenfranchised. As we acknowledge and re-establish the links between Self, Sexuality, Society and Spirituality we empower ourselves and young people to offer our bodies—in fact, our whole lives—to God as a living sacrifice.

Written by Amanda Hughes, 1989. Updated by Tracey E. Herzer, 2006

Learning about the Three Sections of the Journey to Adulthood

Rite-13

Rite-13 is the first two-year section of the program, and in most congregations, the group is made up of 6th and 7th graders. The name Rite-13 comes from the liturgical rite of passage we will celebrate with our teens as they turn 13. Becoming a teenager is celebrated in the church with a service loosely modeled on the Jewish bar mitzvah.

In this ceremony, the young people are charged with the responsibility to use wisely the creative power unleashed within them at puberty. It is procreative power as well as energy useful to all aspects of life. They then lead the congregation in saying a portion of Psalm 139. This is followed by a prayer for parents as they watch their children leave them, embark on the journey of transition from child to adult, and wait for their return as adults and friends. This is followed by a charge to the other young people in the church community. The peer group is reminded to stand beside them, knowing that their support may mean more than any other in the months and years to come. There is also a charge to the congregation to support and instruct the young people on their journey. Reminiscent of the Baptismal Covenant, it is a reminder to the congregation of their commitments and responsibilities to their youth. Finally, the young people kneel as the Celebrant and parents lay hands on each young person. A prayer and a blessing conclude the liturgy and the service continues with the peace.

The two years of Rite-13 are fun. We play a lot of games, laugh a lot, learn a lot. While we do treat matters in a light-hearted way, this does not mean that we avoid dealing with serious issues. A lot of time is devoted to the great stories of Holy Scriptures and their validity in our day. Among other things, we deal with prayer, with the ways we see and encounter God, with possessions and their importance in our life, with trust in God on our faith journey together. Every effort is made to keep the process experiential, with a hands-on and hearts-on focus. Perhaps more than anything else, all activities are geared to build this community, to establish trust and safety, to remind young people again and again that this is their church, and that they are safe and welcome within it.

J2A

Perhaps the difference between the Rite-13 years and the J2A can best be summed up by describing the first evening activities. In Rite 13, the young people meet in the home of a leader. They have a cookout. They run all around the yard, play, laugh, chase, while the leaders cook hot dogs and hamburgers...and clean up at the end. In J2A, the youth arrive at the church to find no leaders, but a series of signs directing them to the kitchen where there are the ingredients and recipes for a spaghetti with meatballs dinner (made from scratch) and a green salad and warmed bread. The young people prepare and serve the meal, and they clean up, without any assistance from the leaders. Of course, the leaders were there all along, waiting in the study, or the parlor, ready to give assistance in the event of an emergency; but the preparation, serving and clean up are now the responsibility of the group. The dynamics have radically changed. At the end of the evening, there is a directed exercise in which the youth have to identify and defend the role they played in this group activity. They may have been the teacher, or the servant, or the comforter, or the facilitator. Whatever their particular role, they must name it and own it and learn from the feedback they receive from others in the group. The two years are off and running. The work of knowing one's self and how one relates to the society and to God has begun.

At the end of the two-year program, the J2A group is given a course in preparation for **Confirmation**. At this point, most young people are ready to make “a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism...” After four years in *The Journey to Adulthood*, participation in Confirmation becomes a mature decision made by spiritually-equipped young people, and it places Confirmation in its proper context, not as a rite of passage, nor as an exit ritual, but rather a chance for the individual youth to confirm that which was said for them and to them at their Baptism. It is their chance to stand before the community of faith and make a public declaration of their understanding of their place in the journey of faith and their desire and willingness to continue along the journey with us, all together, in the Body of Christ.

After the completion of the fourth year, and before entering the YAC program, young people are invited to make a holy **pilgrimage**. It is the part of the program which mostly closely mirrors the separation and liminality of a traditional rite of passage. Every year, thousands of J2A pilgrims venture out into the world. Pilgrimages have been made to the Holy Land, to Ireland, to the historic Cathedrals in England, to Iona in Scotland and the Taizé Community in France. Some groups choose to make a domestic pilgrimage and have visited places such as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, the Native American missions of South Dakota, the Spanish missions of California or the Civil Rights and Underground Railroad tours through the Southeast.

It doesn't matter where the Pilgrims go, as long as they go in search of the traditions of faith-filled men and women, in search of the footsteps of the saints who have gone before us. They go in search of their own encounter with the divine, with Jesus Christ. And because God is good and loving, He is easily found on pilgrimage. The ancient Irish pilgrims say it is not how many miles we travel that makes the pilgrimage, it is the distance traveled by the heart.

Pilgrimage is not a sight-seeing expedition, nor is it a mission trip or a service opportunity. Young people go on pilgrimage for one reason, to seek and to find Christ. The transformation visible in the young pilgrims when they return is nothing short of miraculous. They have spent fourteen days living and breathing the questions of faith. They have sought and been found by God. They have had ample opportunity to use the many skills they have learned in the program. They return to the community ready to receive the new status of Young Adult.

YAC

Following their return from pilgrimage, the young people are re-introduced to the congregation as Young Adults in the Church. From this point on they are in charge of their own program. Their advisors are there to assist them in Bible Study, development of service projects, outreach and ministry. They participate regularly in the worship and generally play an active part in the life of the parish. All this takes place in the loving and supportive community that will listen to them, learn from them, allow them to serve in meaningful capacities, and allow them to succeed and fail, celebrating their successes and lovingly correcting their mistakes.

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

This looks like a really great program and we'd love to implement it. How do we prepare the congregation?

We recommend that you have congregation-wide teaching forums conducted by the clergy and the Christian Education staff. This will have a great impact on the community. In these forums the following points need to be stressed:

1. Clergy endorsement and support is essential. The clergy, especially the church's primary clergyperson, *must* be seen as being actively supportive of the program.
2. The single most powerful impetus for the changes required to implement this program is the modern-day concept of Confirmation as an "exit ritual." The Episcopal Church is trying to redefine the role and the requirements of Confirmation, in the hopes that our young people will remain in the congregation until college or leaving home to enter the work world calls them away. *Journey to Adulthood* does just that.
 - a) Delaying Confirmation helps to facilitate this, as well as fulfill the description of Confirmation as a "mature affirmation...of faith." At St. Philip's, Durham, NC, where the program originated, the congregation had a two-year moratorium on confirming kids who were still in this program. The only exception that was made was for several Liberian families who had recently come to this country and to this congregation. Exceptions should be rare, and at the discretion of the clergy.
3. Stress the underlying principles. "Gender as a gift from God" and "Skills for adulthood" are such empowering concepts that you should have little trouble convincing any community to embrace this program. Adults recognize that there are skills to be learned. Kids are eager for help in coping and succeeding.
4. The program works. It has been tested and refined for many years and is being used inter-denominationally in over 1200 congregations, and we know it has been successful. Attendance at group sessions has been high. Those who have been through the program are regular in their church attendance and are involved in various congregation activities. Far from there being a drop-off following Confirmation, we have seen quite the reverse.
5. Remember, finally, that this program is basically about love. Love the kids. Love each other. Love the program. Love God. Let the whole community join in this act of love.

How do I know this program will work in my congregation? Won't we have to adapt it in some way?

The central concepts—Self, Spirituality, Society, and Sexuality—are powerful and allow for a great deal of flexibility. Some details may need adaptation and the program encourages that, but the central concepts are solid. They have been tested in the crucible of the local congregation, and they have worked.

The on-going work of development inside your particular congregation will probably mirror the process we went through. Use what we have written as a *resource*, which is what it is intended to be; it was not handed down to us on Mount Sinai. It will guide you in the process. There is

always the temptation to “re-invent the wheel.” We encourage you to consider the wheel which we are giving you in this program to be a thing which is well-worn and well-loved. You may want to add some things and to subtract others, but the core remains constant. This program we offer you is the product of many, many hours of work, prayer and reflection and, we believe, worthy of your trust.

We’d love to implement this program in our congregation, but some members don’t believe it will work in our case. What do we do

There are always people who are cautious, can see the negatives or are nay-sayers. Talk to them. Explain the principles. Tell them that it has been tested since 1984 at the congregational level and that it works. Let them know that it has made a difference in hundreds of congregations, and that it will make a difference there. Even more importantly, listen to them. Ask what concerns they have. Honor their concerns as legitimate and see the conversation as a way to learn. Invite them to think with you about ways those concerns might be addressed. Remind them that there is a great deal of flexibility in the program—if you as a congregation decide to handle a particular lesson plan differently that is not only “all right”: it is encouraged and expected. If you still can’t convince them, don’t invest excessive time or energy. Do your best to move ahead and get the program up and running. Once people see that it works, doubters often change into passionate advocates.

Should the congregation offer an alternative program for those who can’t “buy into” this program?

No, it is not necessary to offer an alternative program. Give it some time—this is a process. The congregation and the participants will find their relevant niche together. Many churches experience sick kids weeping because they could not come to class on Sundays and others who drag their reluctant parents to church so that they will not miss class! (In one of our classes which had an enrollment of eighteen, the *average* Sunday attendance over a three-month period was fifteen.)

Our Sunday morning classes are designed much like any other ordinary Church School classes. As such, they stand on their own. With the addition of the Sunday afternoon experiences, there is a great deal of flexibility built into the program. The young people can choose whether they wish to attend all the activities, only the Sunday morning classes, or, very rarely, only the Sunday afternoon and other weekend activities.

There is one point where this flexibility breaks down and that is the weeks leading up to Confirmation, when we require 100% attendance as a sign of good faith and intent. For families and kids desiring Confirmation, this is not a problem. Also, reluctance to attend may be a sign of real concern or confusion over the decision to be confirmed. It may be the only signal the leader will receive. As an aside, we would note that the young people who elected not to be confirmed nevertheless attended every class.

We really want to get this program implemented in our congregation as soon as possible. Should we begin both a Rite-13 and a J2A program at the same time?

We feel it would be best to begin at the beginning. The Rite-13 materials lay a sure foundation for the work of J2A. It takes time to give young people a solid understanding of the Church as a safe haven and to secure their appreciation and acceptance of their gender as a free gift from the

Creator. Rushing into the hard work of teaching the skills of adulthood without the assurance of the gift of gender is a great temptation.

While we acknowledge the benefits of working on adult skills, we also recognize the dangers inherent in taking on too much too soon. Having said that, there are many congregations who have started the program with both groups simultaneously and we have developed weekend retreat designs to facilitate that (see Coordinator's Manual).

Where do we find a Coordinator who can teach the whole thing?

You don't. The Coordinator is just that: a person who *coordinates* the program. Remember the adage that "it takes a village to raise one child"? The congregation is the village. Use its skills. There are three levels of involvement: Leaders, Parents and Resource Teams.

We cover the duties and the training of the leaders in the section of the Coordinator's Manual titled "Guidelines for Recruiting and Training Leaders." We refer you to that section for the details.

The parents get the kids to the activities on time and pick them up on time. Also, they provide snacks and other foodstuffs and once in a while, a beach house or mountain cabin!

Consider forming a Resource Team where the individual members are trained in the basic concepts of the program and given the task of providing extra support and program ideas and leadership for both Rite-13 and J2A. Ideally, there are six to eight persons on each team in a larger congregation; two or three in a smaller congregation. They would meet once to plan activities and calendars for the upcoming year. Then each individual might do only one or two "events" with the kids each year. This is a workable level of commitment for a lot of busy, talented people. Plus, it shows the kids the rich diversity of the congregation's community.

Form *ad hoc* Resource Teams as necessary. At St. Philip's, we identified death and dying, especially in relation to teenage suicide, as a topic that had to be addressed both in Rite-13 and J2A. We identified several congregation members—social workers, psychologists, schoolteachers, and counselors—with expertise in this area. We brought them together and, with their aid, identified and developed some resources for this.

Despite the litany of "ideal qualifications" for leaders, the truth is that any dynamic and energetic person can do this work. Leaders, above all, need to be people who can sustain their commitment and who can always be present to the young people. They need to be honest. They need to love God. Remember, too, given the support of the clergy and the Resource Teams, this is a fun task.

Finally, we recommend that you establish and maintain some sort of Steering Committee that works with the Coordinator. This is another way you can support and sustain your leaders. It can be overwhelming to work so intensively with so many young people, and some sort of mechanism needs to be in place to provide encouragement and to act as a sounding board as well as providing a framework for checking on how the program is going. After all, someone needs to be asking: "Are we still on track?"

I would like to be a leader in one of these groups. I'm ready to make the time commitment, but I'm not sure I'm religious enough. I have so many questions of my own about God—how can I pretend to lead young people to adult faith

First, don't pretend. No one has all the answers. This is a team effort. God joins us in the task and is consistently revealed through our interactions, particularly when we are filled to the brim with questions.

The vast majority of the program is an exploration—a long journey on which we watch, listen, share ourselves, and learn together of the mysteries of God incarnate. Think of it as a long bus tour on which you are the driver. The written materials are the road map, the directions; you will be blessed as you explore this new land.

The most compelling thing in the world is a real person engaged in real life and faith: searching, struggling, seeking to find the Christ. If you have a heart and a mind for this work, and if you can imagine spending time with young people, sharing *your* strengths and *your* weaknesses with them, then we encourage you to “go for it.” Remember that if you start with certainties, you will end with doubts; but if you start with doubts, you will end with certainties. As we promise the new members of J2A: “If you are seeking the Christ, *together* we will find him.”

How do you really get this program started in a congregation? After all, you have to bring two Church School classes together to form the first Rite-13 group. How do you manage this

Most congregations start a new Rite-13 program every two years. The participants are targeted for Rite-13 if their thirteenth birthday falls some time within the two years of the program. So this is usually sixth and seventh graders. Those too young for the program remain in the normal Church School program. Those who are older would go into the J2A or the YAC group, depending on their grade. We are strict on this point as our experience tells us that compromises serve neither the kids, the leaders or the parents.

In terms of bringing together two classes that have not previously studied together in Rite-13, we lay great stress in the first couple of months on forming the group into a community. Once the community has been formed, real teaching can begin.

Remember that all transitions are difficult, but, provided the congregation is prepared, as a core of people become committed to the program, they will help you through the rough times.

You mentioned that “forming community” is an important first task. How can you tell when you have achieved this community?

The Christian community is welcoming, loving, and, above all, kind. The welcoming community helps us avoid the perils of cliques and popularity contests. Love is demonstrated when the group is able to lift up and affirm the gifts of the least popular member. The kindness of the community is manifested when the members listen to and respect each other even when they do not agree.

Participants who attend regularly and are anxious to come to the group activities and Sunday morning classes also demonstrate the successful formation of community.

How do you bring newcomers to the congregation into one of the groups—Rite-13 or J2A or YAC? Doesn't the group eventually become so tightly knit that a newcomer has a tough job breaking in?

“Welcoming the stranger” is one of the hallmarks of the Christian, and one of our Lord’s expectations. Accordingly, we welcome newcomers in right away. There is no need to have a waiting period of any kind. The group, like the Church itself, must *always* welcome the stranger.

This kind of youth program will draw new families in each year. We welcome this growth and the challenge to us to integrate these new personalities into the group. The primary responsibility for welcoming belongs to the young people. They must and should be encouraged, and if necessary taught, to reach out to, to listen to, and to welcome the newcomer.

Parenthetically, we find that participants will often bring a young friend or a relative to class. This provides a stellar opportunity for practicing the art of “welcoming the stranger.”

What happens if a newcomer joins the J2A group? Do you have a Rite-13 ceremony?

We encourage late-comers to celebrate a Rite-13 if they would like to do so. The young people themselves taught us this lesson. Many wanted to do it. The Rite-13 ceremony is an important rite of passage. It defines the moment of transformation from childhood to youth.

On the other hand, we do not insist on it. If you have a newcomer who chooses not to celebrate a Rite-13, have the participants who have celebrated it share their experiences. This helps establish common ground.

How do you manage busy schedules? So many young people are involved in sports and other extra-curricular activities. How do you keep them coming?

First, you set up your schedule for a minimum of three to four months at a time and try to stick to it. Some group leaders set up the whole year’s schedule in advance. At the first meeting, it is wise to ask for a school calendar and sports schedules so that you can do your best to minimize scheduling conflicts.

Second, ask the parents to make a commitment to get their sons and daughters to the meetings. The first six months are critical, and we ask the adults to facilitate high attendance. After this, we have found that group dynamics take over. The young people want to see their friends, and they don’t want to miss what’s next in the work we are doing together.

Finally, do your best to give the program a high profile in the congregation. Let everyone know that this is important. Publicize. Have a bulletin board laden with Rite-13 and J2A pictures. Regular announcements in the congregation newsletter and up-beat conversation about what’s been happening in the groups probably do more to draw the kids in than anything else. Celebrate your work.

How do you deal with kids and parents who won't honor their commitment to the program? Do you ask them to leave?

We try very hard to define our expectations in our initial meeting with the young people and their parents—some congregations even establish a covenant for parents and teens—see the

example in the Coordinator's Manual for more details. We emphasize that Sunday morning is an important time together, not only because of community formation within the group but also because of the Eucharist and the opportunity to worship and pray together. We ask the young people to do their very best to be present at every meeting, morning and afternoon, and to communicate with the leaders when they will be absent.

When a young person is missing for more than one or two meetings, then we take action which varies according to the age group they are in. In Rite-13, one of the leaders contacts the parents to see what the issue is and how it may be resolved. In J2A, we tend to ask one of the participants to seek out the one who is missing.

The parallel between this behavior and Jesus' story about the shepherd and the sheep is obvious. The leader may be the obvious person to go after the missing "sheep," but the kids need to model the behavior of the Christ to one another. They may not be able to recognize that this is what they are doing, but it counts nonetheless.

When one of the participants in J2A has been away for what seems like "too long," then the leaders are the ones who, as in Rite-13, contact the family. Often absence from the program is the only cry for help a leader will receive. There are probably reasons for the absence which may need to be heard by the leader. Sometimes it's just crazy schedules or perhaps a family wounded by divorce in which communication has broken down and the young people get lost in the shuffle. Other times there may be hard feelings or hurts that need to be dealt with.

Under what circumstances would you ask a participant to leave the program?

There are very few of these—and lack of attendance isn't one of them. Certainly violence or overly aggressive behavior or undue use of bad language would be contributory factors. There are also other seriously self-destructive or group-destructive behaviors that should not be tolerated.

In the more than fifteen years of our experience with the program, the number of participants asked to leave is still at only one or two. Moreover, we feel strongly that this decision should be reached only after prolonged discussion with the parents and the participant, and with the involvement of the congregation's primary clergyperson. Before making such a drastic decision, ask yourself if there would ever be a time when we would ask someone to leave the Church?

Don't the kids drop out of the program once they've been confirmed?

Absolutely not! One of the encouraging things about this program is the regular attendance on Sundays and the full participation in the congregation of the young people in the YAC program. We attribute this to the strong group formation in Rite-13 and J2A and the fact that we are giving teens real work to do.

We encourage the YACs to design their own Sunday morning program and to set up their afternoon programs as well. It is our goal to encourage the YACs to design a more service-oriented program in the future, but our hopes are tempered by our desire to make the Church a safe haven for these young people. We do not want to make it a place where they *have* to work in order to feel welcome. We'd rather they hang around the kitchen on a Sunday night than stop

coming because new expectations were placed on them. In this time and place a sense of community and fellowship is of paramount importance to young people. In time, this safe haven will empower the young people to reach out and to serve. Facilitating that is our number-one priority.

What happens if one of the members of the J2A group decides not to be confirmed? Don't you worry that peer pressure will force the Confirmation decision on someone who's simply not ready?

Often in this program at least one of the kids in each group has decided not to be confirmed. Hats off to them! It is not easy to swim against the stream; but, simply stated, they were not sure and were brave enough to say so.

The program is not solely a preparation for Confirmation. Nothing about the program is so "Confirmation-specific" that the participants have not benefited from the lessons and the group meetings. In fact, we believe that the participants are really enriched by their exposure to the ideas and the requirements of Confirmation.

In the case of those who elect not to be confirmed with their peers, however, we suggest that, when they do seek Confirmation later on, they should attend Confirmation classes with the adults who are preparing for this.

Would you ever consider letting a YAC lead the Rite-13 group?

Absolutely not. They are only "young adults" after all. The responsibility is enormous and time-consuming. Plus, the age difference (only five years or so) seems problematic to us. It seems to us that this would be asking for problems in the discipline or romantic areas. The Rite-13 and J2A really need mature adults to manage the group dynamics and to teach the curriculum and lead the program. On the other hand, YACs can be used from time to time as mentors or counselors, especially on weekend activities. Make sure, though, that there is adequate adult supervision.

What about Church School? Would you let a YAC teach pre-school or first or second grade?

Yes. In most congregations, the addition of a few more energetic and enthusiastic Church School teachers would be a great gift. We would let them team-teach with another adult, and we would use them as substitute teachers as needed. But remember, these young adults will be expecting to be treated as *young adults*. Selecting their partner carefully would be crucial for success.

Don't you worry that, by placing so much emphasis on gender equity, you run the risk of creating "gender neutral" or "neutered" young people? I want my son to be a real man!

We want our young people—our sons and daughters—to be real men and women, too. The *Journey to Adulthood* program is not designed to make "sensitive 'touchy-feely' religious converts." Our goals are simple. We want to enable people to live responsible, adult lives, hallmarked by joyful play, hard work, celebration, and service.

High energy shining through a loving life is what makes an adult successful, appealing, and powerful. The program is designed to help young men and women tap into their own creative energies and, through the filter of their emerging personalities, shine brightly in the world.

St. Irenaeus once observed that “the glory of God is a human being, fully alive.” Certainly, we want our young men and women to be thoughtful and sensitive; but we also want them to be wise, strong, healthy, courageous, and fully alive in their unique place in history. Freeing them from the manipulation of gender stereotyping and engaging them in the marvelous work of assuming new levels of responsibility in their personal lives and in the world helps to accomplish this.

What does the curriculum have to say about the sanctity of marriage and the problem of young people having sex outside of marriage? Why don't you teach abstinence?

One of the goals of our curriculum is to empower young people to be faithful and loyal partners in life-long relationships. Marriage, as a covenantal relationship between two adults and as a living example of God's promise to be faithful to his Church, is always held with due regard. Faithfulness within the context of Holy Matrimony is a goal which the Church holds before us and which we support wholeheartedly. Having said that, the curriculum focuses its energy on responsible decision making and ministry to and with young people. We also want to be honest with young people, loving them where they are in their lives. The fact of the matter is that regardless of our desire for young people to wait to be sexually intimate until they are within the confines of that level of committed passion and dedication, many will not.

Many surveys show that over **HALF** of all fifteen-year-old females in America today are sexually active. In every dialogue we have had with young people on the subject of sexual activity outside of marriage, there is great confusion and an implicit request for help in understanding the nature of human sexuality. In order to be responsible to the call we have to train and love young people, the curriculum engages them in questions concerning faithfulness, monogamy, loyalty, safety and preparing oneself to take on the consequences of one's choices. By training young people in skills of active listening, negotiation and assertion, while valuing the sacredness of the body and the sacramental nature of sexual intimacy (*If you do it, God will be present*), we hope to change the discussion from “Do I or don't I have sex?” to “How does one determine what constitutes an intimate and holy relationship between sexual partners? How do I learn to live according to the values which God intends for his people?”

There is never any question that we want them to wait, never to use sexual intimacy as a means to get to know someone or even as a means to find the touch and closeness which temporarily comforts some of their loneliness. Rather, we hold out sexuality as one of the amazing and life-giving gifts of God to God's children. We maintain that it is so holy and so precious a source of life and joy that it ought to receive our careful attention. Even though young people may receive the basics of “sex education” in schools: a litany of diseases to be feared, how to use a condom, how to avoid illness and date rape; there is so much more that is needed, and the Church has been painfully silent on the basics of love and intimacy.

It is true that there is no lesson plan on the importance of abstinence. Rather, there are a series of discussions and lessons designed to open the discussion. Individual youth leaders are encouraged to express their longing for young people to be patient, delay gratification and be faithful to God.

The lesson plans on sexuality are not the beginning and end of the discussion. We encourage congregations, youth leaders and clergy to use those lesson plans which they feel are appropriate for their young people as catalysts for an ongoing discussion of the holiness and sanctity of all God's gifts to us, and as a springboard for continued discussion of responsibility and faithful stewardship of the lives we've been given.

What about the adults in the church community? They could benefit from these skills you are teaching to the young people, couldn't they?

Of course! In fact, parents of youth in the program consistently asked for an adult program. In response, *The Adult Journey* was developed. It is modeled on J2A, the middle two years of the *Journey to Adulthood* program. We also suggest *Living in Community: An Exploration of Benedictine Spirituality* and *Lift Up Your Hearts!: Exploring the Eucharist*. Each of the adult programs can be done in 25 weekly one-hour sessions, or in 12 longer sessions.

Contact LeaderResources for further information 1-800-941-2218 or visit our website www.leaderresources.org.

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**PLEASE NOTE: Lessons don't have to be done in this order.
One lesson does not equal one week; many lessons may take 2, 3 or 4 weeks.**

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Rite-13

Introduction

Rite-13 is a two-year program designed to build self-esteem in the context of the Christian community. Lay leaders, clergy and the parish at large must work together to establish a framework for friendships which bridge gender stereotypes and encourage involvement in the life of the full congregation.

Goals

The goals of Rite-13 are:

- To celebrate God's gift of manhood and womanhood
- To affirm the power of creative energy and to explore the thoughts and disciplines which allow individuals to effect change in the world
- To teach, by word and example, the principles of freedom, responsibility and friendship

Guiding Scripture passages are:

- Lord, you have searched me out and known me (*Psalms 139*)
- Human beings created equal and co-creators with God (*Genesis 1:26-31*)
- The boy Jesus in the temple (*Luke 2:42-52*)
- The parable of the talents (*Matthew 25:14-30*)

Rationale

The young people in this age group need consistent reinforcement and modeling of the ideas expressed in the Rite-13 ceremony. Extreme care should be taken to create a safe educational environment which values both diversity and unity, and encourages play and service while nurturing both the individual members and the group.

The fundamental purpose of Rite-13 meeting times is to build a foundation of principles and memories. The Rite-13 program is thus designed to provide opportunities for play, laughter, the effort (mental and physical) of working at tasks, and participating as a group. Over time, these activities will become the treasured memories of the group. Memories are important in structuring the community. The Christian faith, like any other religious tradition, is rooted in a heritage of shared memories.

These memories will retain their potency over the six years of the Journey to Adulthood program and on into adult life. It is a blessing to have these formative memories placed in the context of the Christian community. Young people in this age group are very focused on the self, the struggle for identity, personal power and expression. The focus, therefore, is balanced between physical activities—ropes courses, CROP walks, ski trips, hikes and general romping around—and a slow and steady exploration of the development of personality and faith.

Leaders should be prepared for approximately 160 contact hours with the children over the two years! The Rite-13 years prepare the young people for the Journey to Adulthood years. This is a time of tremendous growth and change. The curriculum makes every effort to reflect the rich texture of this time of life. By working together, the leaders, the young people and the Church community can all benefit from the richness of God's gifts to us.

Sunday morning sessions cover:

- I. Bible studies focusing on the lectionary readings (especially the Gospel) and a core of lesson plans which focus attention on the basic concepts of our curriculum: Self, Sexuality, Spirituality and Society.
- II. What's in the News
 - A. Understanding the world in terms of what we are learning in Rite-13
 - B. Tracking the careers of men and women
- III. Learning to Listen/Learning to Care
 - A. Conversation and fellowship
 - B. Food

Sunday afternoon or weekend sessions cover:

- I. Physical activities and movies
- II. Diocesan events
- III. Service work in the community

On the following pages are two sample lessons from the Rite-13 program.

I AM MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Lesson Five MY SPECIAL QUALITIES

Areas covered

This section is principally focused on Self but also brings in Spirituality.

Goal

This session is designed to get the participants thinking about themselves and their personal qualities (and hang-ups) and relating these to one of the great biblical stories. It helps them to see that God may call them to some special ministry and that it is all right to question God's call, even to argue with God's call.

Bible Study

Have one or two of the participants read the story of The Calling of Moses (Exodus 3:1-4:20). To really make the point, assign three participants the roles of Narrator, God and Moses in a role-play of the story. This can also be done as a chancel drama. With little effort you can create your own version of this. Review the lesson, ask for volunteers for the roles and let them act it out.

The points to be emphasized here are:

- Why did God pick on Moses specifically? Was it purely random or did Moses have certain gifts?
- Why does God call people generally?
- Are there any other examples in Scripture of God calling people?

You may wish to have the participants look up some of the other stories of God's calling people: Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, Peter, Andrew, James and John, and Paul. Have the young people find the following passages in their Bibles (a good way to learn where the various books of the Bible are!).

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Luke 1:26-38

Isaiah 6:1-8

Mark 1:16-20

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Acts 9:1-19

There are all sorts of questions that arise from these readings:

- What do you imagine it must be like to have God speak to you or call you? (One participant the author can recall said it must be like the voice in *Field of Dreams*: "If you build it, he will come.")
- How are the responses different?
- Did any of those called by God argue with God?
- Is it OK to argue with God?

For another example of arguing with God, see the story of Abraham pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-33).

Looking into the Story

Have the participants work on the discussion questions below. Ask them to jot down their answers in the spaces provided on the handout. Try to get them to imagine that they are Moses and put themselves in his place. Stimulate discussion by throwing out suggested answers.

II How would you describe the way Moses felt about himself?

Possible answers include: “I was scared.” “Please don’t send me on anything special.” “I don’t have much confidence in my ability to convince people.” “I was a failure the last time I was in Egypt.” “I don’t believe God can make me special.”

II Why might Moses have felt the way he did? Do you think Moses had a good or a bad image of himself? Why?

His family made fun of him when he was a kid. His teachers called him “dummy.” He didn’t believe God. He thought he was imagining it.

II What kind of image of Moses did God have? Why?

God obviously thought he could do the job! God made him so God should know. But then God got frustrated with Moses’ low self-esteem and finally gave the speaking part to Aaron.

II How did Moses’ image of himself compare with the way God viewed him? Why?

They were poles apart—God thought he could do it and Moses didn’t.

II When God and Moses got through with this conversation, do you think Moses felt better or worse about himself? Why?

The answers here are likely to be on both sides—he might have felt worse because God ended up annoyed at him or, upon reflection, he might have felt better thinking that if God chose him for this job he must be worth something.

My Own Story

The whole point of Bible study, in the author’s opinion, is to have people try to apply these stories to their own experience. When the participants have talked through these points and decided about Moses’ character, have them try to identify how they would have felt in the same situation by answering the following:

II How would you have felt in this situation if you had been Moses?

Possible answers include: Scared. Confident. Like an idiot. Pretty special.

II When was the last time you felt like Moses?

II How do you think God feels about you?

Angry. Okay, I guess. Not interested. Loving. God feels I’m a special person with special interests.

II Do you think your view of yourself is different from God’s view of you?

II What is God’s role in creating a person? How does that make you feel?

This really is the kicker. Try to bring out examples of the loving nature of God. Possible answers include: Innocent bystander. Mad scientist. Loving creator. Assembly-line manufacturer. Ask the participants to express their personal feelings about God.

II What two qualities do you especially like about yourself?

II What two qualities about yourself would you like to change?

Participants do not have to share these. Skip if you think they’re too personal.

How Do I Feel about Myself Now?

This is where Self and Spirituality meet. Have the participants read the quotations selected out loud. Try to get some discussion going:

- What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

- Are both men and women made in the image of God? How does this affect how we regard each other? (We will return to this critical point in a later exercise; just introduce the concept for now.)
- What does it mean to you that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean that you have the seed of God in you?
- What does it mean that this seed can grow into God?

Some of the participants may ask who some of the people quoted are. St. Augustine was one of the great teachers of the Church who lived in the waning days of the Roman Empire (354-430 A.D.). Meister Eckhart was a medieval German mystic who lived from 1260 to 1329.

After this discussion, have the participants answer the following questions. Again, try to stimulate discussion.

- II Is God concerned with your physical characteristics?
- II Is God concerned with your personality characteristics?
- II Of the two—physical or personality characteristics—which do you think means the most to God? Why?
- II Who is your best friend? Do you think God likes him or her better than you? Why or why not?
- II What have you learned from reading these verses about how God feels about you? Do you feel special in any way?

Closure

Use the following prayer or one you and/or the youth compose:

Dear God: you know how klutzy we are, and how bad we feel about ourselves, and how afraid we get to even try. Keep reminding us that you love us just as we are; and help us, if we have to be klutzes, to be brave klutzes for you. In Jesus' Name we pray. *Amen.*¹

This plan includes a handout with questions for youth to answer on their own before discussion.

¹ From the Rite-13 group at Church of the Apostles, Belchertown, MA. In addition to learning the collect format, it is also helpful to have youth learn to pray spontaneously—something Episcopalian adults are often uncomfortable doing. Modeling this and giving youth opportunities to pray aloud can help make prayer a more natural part of their lives.

TALKING TO GOD — LISTENING TO GOD

Lesson One WHAT IS PRAYER?

Areas Covered

Spirituality, Self.

Goal

To give young people an opportunity to pray together and reflect on the nature and purpose of prayer.

Objectives

To establish the Rite-13 classroom as “holy ground.”

To look at the ways in which we currently understand prayer.

To spend time in prayer.

Guiding Scriptures

Exodus 3:1-7 Moses takes off his shoes at the burning bush.

Joshua 5:13-15 Joshua takes off his shoes when the Lord tells him.

John 13:2b-20 Jesus washes the feet of his disciples.

Background

Sometimes we need a reminder of who God really is. We forget, in the midst of our busy lives, that God is holy, powerful, omnipotent, wise, and in the person of Jesus Christ, a servant and savior. In this lesson, we hope to surprise young people into considering the presence of God in their classroom. We want to make a prayer space—and like Moses, Joshua, and the disciples, we are going to take off our shoes as a reminder of the power and holiness of God.

Being barefoot in this modern culture is a sign of poverty and weakness. It was the same in the Bible. The men and women needed their shoes to protect them from the heat and stones and dust. We need our shoes to protect us from concrete and glass shards, from hot asphalt and cold marble. And we use shoes as status symbols. The television and print media seem convinced that we will be better athletes, better people if we wear hundred-dollar sneakers or all-leather Doc Martin boots. It is a great equalizer to remove our shoes and sit barefoot with one another. It’s a little thing, but its significance is reinforced throughout Scripture. God wants us to stand on holy ground, and to feel it through our feet.

This may seem a bit risky to leaders and young people. Suddenly we all find ourselves self-conscious—what if my feet smell? What if I am wearing hose or tights? What if I have ugly feet? What if I have toenail polish with chips and scratches? What if I need a pedicure, badly? All of these concerns are just tiny reminders of how difficult it is for all of us to be vulnerable to one another and to God. If we cannot even show one another our feet, how will we welcome one another into our day-to-day lives? If we think everything depends on whether we have clean toes, how will we set out to do God’s work in the world?

For the most part, we want to do good, to work for social justice, for peace and equality, but only if we can maintain our position as “right,” “good,” “clean,” superior.” Taking off our shoes to talk about

prayer is one way to touch our inadequacy and our fears. And in a funny sort of way, taking off our shoes in front of each other will remind us, if we have hearts and eyes and ears ready to learn, that God already knows everything about us—even the shape of our tiny feet.

The second thing we will focus on is the nature of prayer. What are we trying to accomplish? Why do we do it at all? Over the next few weeks, we will look at lots of ways to pray and ways to think about prayer. But for today, the focus is on getting to know who God is, and who we are. Prayer is one access point. In addition, we want to remind young people that getting to know God requires that we try to respond to God's action, God's attendance in our lives. God is already here, waiting for us to turn and look and see how good and loving and faithful and present he is.

Preparation

Make a sign for the classroom door which reads:

REMOVE YOUR SHOES AND LINE THEM UP NEATLY BY THE DOOR.
THIS IS HOLY GROUND.

Bring flowers, candles, a scarf or piece of linen cloth, a loaf of bread, a glass of wine, a branch or a vine. Icons or other images of Jesus and God might be a welcome addition as well.

Activity One

As the young people arrive, explain to them that today we are going to make our classroom into a prayer closet. Do not let anyone in who is wearing shoes. One leader may need to stand outside the door to help facilitate the removal of shoes.

Rearrange the furniture, and set up a space for prayer.

This could take on many different forms. Perhaps your group would want to set up individual corners for prayer. In this case, you might want to have enough flowers and candles to go around. (Leaders get to keep the matches, of course, and will have to explain that they are going to function as the acolytes this morning!) Or perhaps the group will want to make a central focal point. Choose a spot on the floor in the middle of the room or create an altar-like arrangement at one end. Ask the young people what configuration they would like to try.

Work quickly. Involve everyone.

Once the space is prepared, light the candles and turn out the lights. Ask the young people to sit silently for three minutes.

At the end of the three minutes, a leader asks:

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

WHY ARE WE DOING IT?

WHAT IS PRAYER AFTER ALL?

Turn on the lights and record answers on newsprint.

The answer we are looking for is: We're talking to God. But the question remains: *Why?* And why did we take our shoes off?

Leaders may want to take a few minutes to explain that prayer is a word for the special way God and God's people talk to one another. Prayer is the means to building a relationship. We took our shoes off to remind us that we all need God, and God is not interested in our looking cool or smelling good or being well-dressed. God is more interested in our coming into relationship than impressing one another. God wants us to be who we are.

Leaders may want to make note of the stories in the Old and New Testaments where God asked

people to take off their shoes—with Moses at the burning bush, with Joshua at the walls of Jericho, and with Jesus at the foot-washing. If the young people are unfamiliar with these stories, have them look them up in the Bible and read them aloud. Talk about what happened to these people and why they took off their shoes. In all three examples, holiness and vulnerability were the issues. We cannot do the work of God in the world—we can hardly pray at all, if we come with all sorts of protection. Taking off our shoes reminds us that we are dealing with God. We take off our shoes as a small reminder of our need to be humble before God.

Activity Two

Try this as a demonstration of the problems of getting to know someone! Ask one young person to stand in the middle of the room. Ask all the others to sit in a circle around the central figure, facing away from her. Recording responses on the newsprint, ask the young people to describe the central figure. What is her name, her parents' names; what color are her eyes? How long is her hair? Is she smiling? Frowning? Laughing? Crying? Ask as many questions as you can think of, and be sure to ask specific questions, ones that will make the group realize that they will have trouble answering the questions without looking at the one in the middle. What is she wearing? What color is her shirt? Are her toenails painted? What size shoe does she wear?

After the group has listed as many things as they can, have them turn around and face the one in the middle. Ask a new round of questions, or ask again the questions that were difficult or impossible to answer without looking.

Until the young people acknowledge that they need to ask that central figure, need to talk to her and with her, their experience and understanding of this individual will be limited. It's hard to answer a question like, "What did she have for breakfast?" without asking her, "What did you have for breakfast?"

Prayer is like that.

A lot of what we say in prayer is really looking away from God and thinking things over. We look at our past experience, our memories, our knowledge, but we avoid looking at God. Perhaps we are even afraid that if we look, we won't be able to see God. But God has promised that as we look at Jesus, in the Bible and in each other, we will begin to see and know God's face. When we look to see God, we join with Moses and Joshua and David and Mary and Martha and Paul and all the men and women throughout history and in our present day who have looked and have seen the one true God.

Ask the young people to list ways that they might get to know God.

Possible answers might include:

Prayer

Leaders might ask: Do you all pray? What kinds of things do you pray for?

Reading the Bible

Leaders might ask: Yeah, but do you ever read the Bible? Why? Why not?

Talking to people who know God

Leaders might ask: When was the last time you asked someone to tell you about God? Or, when was the last time you told someone else about God?

What about feeding the poor?

Clothing the homeless?

Can you really see Jesus in your schoolteachers? In other kids at the mall? In your moms and dads?

Leaders might suggest that this week we all try to see God in everyone. After all, we are all made

in God's image. There must be some sparkle of God in everybody and everything. Remember the psalmist says that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth shows forth his handiwork" (*Psalms 19:1*). We can get to know God by opening our eyes to see the people and the world around us. We can even ask God to open our eyes to see all the ways that we turn away from looking, turn away from seeing God in our day-to-day lives.

Closure

Ask young people to choose one of the objects leaders brought to the classroom this morning. Ask them to hold it in their hands and look closely at it. Assure them that each of these objects is a symbol designed to remind us to look at God. Each object is there to bring us closer to the one who made us. Explain that you are going to read the following verses from the Bible to welcome God to come to us, and be known to us in prayer. Holding the objects, stand in a circle with arms linked. Leaders will read the following:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

Jesus said, "I am the vine."

Our God is a consuming fire, a burning bush. God whispers in our hearts. Our God cares about every single thing we do, think, remember, and want. But most of all, our God wants to be in relationship with each of us, individually and collectively, as living members of the Body of Christ, standing barefoot on holy ground.

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Gracious God, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the power of your spirit, lift us up to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God. Give us ears and eyes and hearts to see you and your hand in everyone, everything, all the time, because we want to know you, and we want you to know us. We ask all this and so much more through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

— *adapted from BCP, p. 832, The Prayer for Quiet Confidence*

A CELEBRATION OF MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

Following the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, the Celebrities together with their parents, sponsors, the other participants in the Rite-13 class, and the Celebrant move to the chancel steps.

THE PRESENTATION

Sponsors

_____, we present (N.N.) and (N.N.) who this day move from childhood to manhood and womanhood.

Celebrant

Dear People of God: The transformation from childhood to womanhood or manhood marks one of God's great gifts. Today we celebrate the gift of womanhood and manhood with these young people.

(N.) and (N.): by the grace of God you have lived through the pains and joys of childhood, and have grown strong. Now, as men and women, it is given to you to share God's power of creation. Human beings, because they are made in God's image, are the only creatures on earth who can choose how to use their creative power — not only to create new life, but also to shape the world according to God's purpose. God calls us to use this gift to build and not to destroy. Are you aware of God's gift to you and the responsibility to use it wisely?

Celebrities

I am.

THE PSALM

Celebrant

Let us join with these young people in reciting Psalm 139. The congregation is asked to repeat the antiphon.

Celebrities

LORD, you have searched me out and known me;

you know my sitting down and my rising up;

you discern my thoughts from afar.

If I take the wings of the morning

and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea,

Even there your hand will lead me

and your right hand hold me fast.

Antiphon

Your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

Celebrities

For you yourself created my inmost parts;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I will thank you because I am marvelously made;

your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

Antiphon

Celebrities

My body was not hidden from you,
while I was being made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;
all of them were written in your book;
they were fashioned day by day,
when as yet there were none of them.

Antiphon

Celebrities

Search me out, O God, and know my heart;
try me and know my restless thoughts.
Look well whether there be any wickedness in me
and lead me in the way that is everlasting.

Antiphon

THE PRAYER FOR THE PARENTS

Celebrant

When Mary and Joseph searched for Jesus and found him in the temple, talking with the elders, they realized that he was a child no longer. So (N.) and (N.), (N.) and (N.) stand watching their *sons* and *daughters* grow beyond childhood. Let us pray for them.

O God, bless (N.), (N.), (N.), and (N.), the *parents* of these young people. Rejoice with them as their *sons* and *daughters* become men and women. Strengthen them that they may support their *sons* and *daughters* as they begin the journey toward adulthood. Uphold them by your Spirit, that they may comfort them although they can neither walk their roads for them nor shield them from pain. Carry them all safely through this journey, so that one day they may stand together as adults and friends, a joy and a comfort to each other all the days of their lives. *Amen.*

THE CHARGE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Celebrant

Dear friends of (N.) and (N.): As they move beyond the circle of their families, they will need loyal friends. Will you stand by them, knowing that there may be times when your support means more than any other?

Young People

We will, with God's help.

THE CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION

The People stand. The Celebrant continues

As the living Body of Christ, we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do God's work in the world. Will you, as a community of God which spans the generations, share your knowledge and experience with these young people as they become young women and men?

People

We will, with God's help.

Celebrant

Will you guide, guard and sustain them as they grow into the full stature of Christ?

People

We will, with God's help.

THE BLESSING

Celebrant

(N.) and (N.): You have been armed by Almighty God with both the imagination of childhood and the strength and creative power of womanhood and manhood; now you must journey forth to gain the skills you will need to assume full responsibility as an adult.

The Celebrities kneel. The parents come forward and lay their hands on the Celebrities' shoulders. The Celebrant lays hands on each one individually and says

(N.), may Almighty God fill you with courage, wisdom and joy. May Jesus Christ, your strong companion and never-failing friend, make you strong in faith and defend you on every side. May the Holy Spirit guide you in truth and peace. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, rest upon you this day and for evermore.

The People respond

AMEN.

The Peace is then exchanged.

The service continues with the Offertory.

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*****PLEASE NOTE:**

Liturgies included in *The Journey to Adulthood* program may not be used separately from the program. Licenses are required to use any part of this program.

J2A Table of Contents

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One lesson does not equal one week; many lessons may take 2, 3 or 4 weeks.**

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On the following pages are two sample lessons from the J2A program, to give you a taste of the materials.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Journey to Adulthood

Introduction

During this second two-year stage of the curriculum, the focus is placed on the acquisition of skills and vocabulary which prepare and empower the young person to participate in the adult community. There are as many opinions about what it means to be an adult as there are adults, but we have focused on a list of six skills and six affirmations which provide the backbone of the curriculum. As the ideas of the Rite-13 ceremony infuse life and energy into the younger group, so these concepts infuse life and energy into the Journey to Adulthood program.

Goals

The four goals of the Journey to Adulthood (J2A) curriculum are:

- To celebrate the transition from youth to adulthood
- To train young people in the skills of adulthood
- To explore the mystery of our faith heritage
- To establish our experience in the strength of community and liturgy

Scripture

The guiding scripture passages are:

- The calling of Moses (*Exodus 3:1-4:20*)
- Jesus' ministry to the Twelve and the sending out of his disciples (*Matthew 10:1-11:1*)
- Putting on the whole armor of God (*Ephesians 6:10-18*)
- Gifts of the Spirit (*1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13*)
- The parable of the talents (*Matthew 25:14-30*)

Rationale

The curriculum provides a study guide for the three liturgies used in the process and a core of lesson plans, ideas and games which will help accomplish the overall goals. There is a list of resource materials—everything from movies and music to novels and comic strips—all designed to help enhance the process. At every step, the curriculum encourages the leaders to use individual resource people from the community. The young people will have the opportunity to see as many adults as possible while still having the opportunity to form a solid connection with the primary leaders.

The Six Skills

- **Active listening**—the ability to listen creatively and constructively to others and to the self.
- **Negotiation**—the ability to recognize difference and conflict and to manage compromise while showing respect to all parties.
- **Assertion**—the ability to express one's opinions and feelings without aggression or violence.
- **Research and information management**—the ability to see what questions need to be asked, to track the path to find the answers and to make the new-found information useful to the self and to others.
- **Partnership**—the ability to establish relationships built in mutual responsibility and accountability.

- **Leadership**—the ability to think “proactively,” to share the ownership of ideas, inspiration and effort, and to recognize skills and interests in others.

Curriculum

The lesson plans are divided into three types: Sunday morning meetings, Sunday afternoon/evening meetings, and special events and outings.

In designing the curriculum, every effort has been made to facilitate the formation of a successful, cohesive group. The text contains some helpful information about the cognitive and social development of young people and devotional materials appropriate for use with young people as well as adult leaders and parents. There are designs for weekend retreats and fund-raising suggestions—and yet we have tried to leave space in the design for the special interests and concerns of the individual leaders.

Young people are full of questions, answers, hopes, fears and joy. Leaders of this age group will find them to be challenging, impossible, magical and, ultimately, happily exhausting. The changes over the two years are marked. By the end of the process, these young people will be ready to choose (or not choose) their Confirmation and to make a public statement of their transition from youth to adulthood.

Meeting Times:

- One hour each Sunday morning during the church school year
- Two hours (approximately) every other Sunday afternoon (suggested times: 4-6 p.m.)
- Three overnight/retreat experiences

Sunday Morning Lesson Plans:

Two years of lessons covering the key concerns:

- I. Bible studies focusing on the lectionary texts, using one of the suggested study guides.
- II. Activities and study guides to prompt discussions on Sundays.
- III. Learning to Listen/Learning to Care.
 - A. Conversations and fellowship.
 - B. Food.

Special Events/Outings:

If possible, the group should make three retreats. The first is a Lock-In/Overnight in the fall of Year I. This is followed by an Urban Adventure in the spring of Year I or the fall of Year II. Finally, one grand Pilgrimage is planned for the summer following Year II. The curriculum includes some guidelines for this experience.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Lesson Two

PRAYER CYCLES AND PRAYER BEADS

Areas Covered

Spirituality, Self

Goal

To introduce the young people to prayer beads
To encourage spiritual growth through the creative process

Guiding Scriptures

John 1:3 ...all things came into being through him.

1 Tim. 4:4, 5 ...provided it is received with thanksgiving...it is sanctified by God's word and prayer.

Background

For millennia people have used repetitive prayer cycles as a means of entering into a deep place of meditative silence. The repetitive rhythm of praying the same prayer or prayers over and over again occupies the conscious mind in a way that helps silence the “chattering” in our heads that often occurs when we want to be still and rest in God's presence. These prayer cycles help us move into another, deeper level of communicating with God.

Early Christians kept track of their prayers by counting beads, by tying knots, or by discarding pebbles. Because beads on a cord had the advantage of being reusable, over time strings of prayer beads, “rosaries” became widely used. Although today the term “rosary” has narrowed to signify a particular type of prayer bead most commonly associated with Roman Catholicism (see Lesson Plan Two), there are other forms of prayer beads (rosaries) which deserve a moment's examination.

In terms of praying with young people, one of the appealing aspects of prayer beads is that it is possible to create a worship resource which is entirely personal and original to the user. Inexpensive beads are available from craft shops and catalogues in all sorts of shapes, sizes, colors, and materials. It is a simple matter and an enjoyable group activity to thread them onto a cord, heavy thread, or sturdy elasticized string (available wherever the beads are sold) in various patterns as the spirit moves, knotting between the beads. Generally prayer beads contain between ten and fifty beads knotted onto a string. The beads and/or knots are then counted off between the thumb and forefinger as the prayers are said, silently or aloud.

Before stringing the beads, the group will need a few moments of quiet time to prayerfully decide how he or she might best use such a length of prayer beads. Done in a quiet setting, with the available materials spread out in an orderly and attractive fashion before them, there is a surprising sense of joy which the young people will experience as they allow the whole self—body, mind, and spirit—to become unselfconsciously engaged in the task of thoughtful creation.

A starting point might be to give consideration to the sort of prayer which most draws the person creating the prayer chain.

- Is the prayer which Jesus taught the apostles—the Lord's Prayer—a favorite?
- Or the Jesus Prayer? (“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.”)

- Combinations of prayers can be used—e.g., alternating the Gloria Patri (“Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit”) with the Trisagion (“Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us.”)
- Or perhaps a multi-functional string of prayer beads could be created to be used for praying through particular scripture stories or psalms, for praying for one's family or the needs of others, for simply sitting in praise or thanksgiving, or for praying in any way at all, including simply holding the beads and opening one's heart to the Lord. The possibilities are endless.

Simple practicalities need to be considered when deciding on the design of the beads. For example, tiny beads are probably an impractical choice for someone with larger fingers. And a string with fifty beads on it may be the wrong choice for someone who wants to carry the prayer chain with them at all times. Some types of cord are too large for certain sizes of beads—and glass beads which might break easily might not be a good idea.

The idea of using objects from the material world to enhance spiritual consciousness is not new. The sacramental use of “signs” has been appreciated in worship and personal piety since time began, whether in the form of water, wine, bread, candle light, etc. Jesus' teaching utilized the surroundings of his people: vineyards, sheep, shepherds, oil lamps, fig trees, etc. So it is very appropriate to give serious consideration to things like what shapes and colors of beads might best be chosen for the prayer string, since the string itself can become an important resource, a tool for devotion.

Materials:

- Beads in various shapes, sizes, colors—enough for at least 25 per participant. The holes should be big enough to permit the cord to pass through easily. The cost of the beads—available at most local craft shops—can vary greatly.
- Cord or string strong enough and thin enough to string beads; minimum 24" per participant.
- The handout with various prayers printed on them—enough to give a copy to everyone.
- Scissors for cutting cord.
- Needles for clearing bead holes when necessary; also for threading when needed.
- Tables and chairs to provide sufficient working space.

Preparation:

Set up the room with the materials attractively displayed on one table. Have a string or two of prayer beads on display as samples.

Activity: Making Prayer Beads

Introduce the lesson by explaining the highlights under “General Background” in the introduction and from “Background Information” at the beginning of this lesson. Pass around the sample prayer beads and the prayer sheets. Discuss any questions which arise. Ask:

- Where have you seen prayer beads before?
- Why do you think people use prayer beads? What is their value?

Take the sample prayer beads from the table and demonstrate one or preferably, two ways, to use it. You will need to actually practice this ahead of time so that you can authentically pray! If you have 20 beads you might not want to pray through all 20 of them, but do enough repetitions so the group understands the process. Repeat the process, using another prayer. So, for example, you might do the Jesus Prayer (“Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”) and the Lord’s Prayer.

Tell the group they will each have an opportunity to make their own prayer beads but that each person needs to think about how he or she might use the beads. So you will give them several minutes of silence to reflect on *how they might use their prayer beads*. Lead the young people through the steps of

relaxation found in the introduction. Then say: Think now about how you might use your prayer beads. What prayer or prayers might you pray? Allow for a few minutes of silence.

Then allow a further few minutes of silence for the young people to think about the design of their prayer beads. Ask: How many beads do you want? How will you arrange them?

After a couple of minutes of silence, ask the young people to ask God to guide them as they create their own prayer beads. After another minute of silence, invite the young people to slowly become aware of the room, open their eyes and, when they are ready, quietly move to the table where you have laid out the beads. Tell them to select the beads and string they want and find a place in the room where they can work in silence. As they begin to move, remind them of what they learned about icon-painting in Rite-13—that the icon writers do their work as a visible expression of prayer. Invite them to work in silence, praying as they assemble their prayer beads. Tell them there are no rules for making knots between the beads—anything goes as long as it's bigger than the hole in the bead, for obvious reasons! Nor is there any set number of beads although they might want to think about the finished size and how they might use it. If they plan to put it into their pocket, it can't be too big!

Allow at least 20-30 minutes for the group to create their prayer beads. You might want to play chants or other meditative music in the background during this time. Set the tone by walking around and speaking quietly. Absolute silence isn't necessary but an atmosphere of quiet prayerfulness is appropriate.

When the first group members finish, invite them to gather in the area where you will do closing prayers—in the group's regular sacred space or in a circle on the floor. Encourage them to use their prayer beads to pray while they wait for the others to finish.

When all are finished and have gathered ask: What was this experience like for you? What did you learn? What will you take home with you—how can you use what you learned?

Closing Prayer

Use the prayer beads as a group for your closing prayer. Decide what kind of prayer to pray (e.g. the Jesus Prayer, which is short) and decide how many times to pray it. Have the young people sit in a circle and, with their eyes closed or open, pray a cycle of 10 or 15 prayers together. Be creative—there is no wrong way to do this!

(Alternative closing) If a clergy person is available, bring the beads in to the sanctuary altar, where they can be placed before him or her and blessed with a slight adaptation of the form found on p. 204 in the *Book of Occasional Services*. After the prayer, the clergy person can pick up each string of beads and the young person who created it can come forward to receive it. The clergy person can then end by saying: "Go in peace, and the God of peace go with you." or a dismissal of his or her choice.

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Blessing Prayer Beads

Antiphon by Congregation:

Christ is the icon of the invisible God; all things were created through him and for him.

Clergy: Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior manifested your glory in his flesh, and sanctified the outward and visible to be a means to perceive realities unseen: Accept, we pray, these prayer beads, and grant that as we use them, our hearts may be drawn to things which can be seen only by the eye of faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Antiphon by Congregation:

Christ is the icon of the invisible God; all things were created through him and for him.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION
LESSON TWO: PRAYER BEADS

HANDOUT: PRAYERS FOR USE WITH PRAYER BEADS

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
 and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
 and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 forever and ever. Amen.

Jesus Prayer

Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

OR

Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.

Gloria Patri

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father the Almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
 He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
 and born of the Virgin Mary.
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate;
 was crucified, died, and was buried.
 He descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again.
 He ascended into heaven,
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

(p. 833 *BCP*)

For Those We Love

Almighty God, we entrust all who are dear to us to your never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come, knowing that you are doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (p. 831, *BCP*)

A Collect for Grace

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (p. 100, *BCP*)

Prayer for Mission

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen. (p. 124, *BCP*)

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LISTENING SKILLS

LEADER'S GUIDE

Goal

To explore our capacity to listen carefully to the self and to others.

Area Covered

Self.

Objectives

- To practice listening and following directions.
- To communicate and assess our ability to give and receive precise information.

Time Allotted

Exercises: 1 hour
Reflection and prayer: 40 minutes
Food and fellowship: 20 minutes
Total time for this exercise: 2 hours.

Materials Required

Newsprint
Magic markers
Enough copies of each drawing to allow every team of two one copy of each drawing.
(see handout following this lesson plan)
Bibles

Action

The group divides itself into pairs. (**Note:** If there is an odd number of participants, one of the leaders should join a team.) Each team receives a piece of paper and a pen or pencil (try newsprint and markers). The teams should spread out so that each has a quiet corner in which to work. The exercises are timed. The teams have only four minutes to complete each exercise.

Exercise One: The team members stand back to back. One member is designated as the Describer, the other the Artist. The Describer is given drawing #1A. Without being able to see the Artist's effort, the Describer gives verbal instructions to create the drawing. The Artist must remain silent throughout.

After all the teams have accomplished this task (or the allotted time has run out), the team members reverse roles. Drawing #1B is given to the new Describer.

Exercise Two: The basic rules remain the same. However, this time the drawing (#2A) is somewhat more complex, and the Describer may watch the Artist's effort. The Artist may not ask questions. The Describer may not say "Stop" or "No, that's wrong," but must do his or her best to communicate in light of what he or she sees.

At the end of this task, the teams again reverse roles and repeat the exercise using drawing #2B.

Exercise Three: In this level, the Describer may see the work of the Artist and the Artist may ask questions. Use drawing #3A.

Reverse the roles again and repeat using drawing #3B.

Reflection

How well do we listen? It is not enough to know something; we must be able to articulate what we know, and we must be able to combine our pre-existing understanding with new, additional information. These exercises provide a framework for experiencing our strengths and weaknesses in communicating.

After all the drawings have been completed, ask each team to assess themselves: Which drawing was the best and why? Then come back together as a group and discuss the following questions:

- What makes this so difficult? Who is the best artist?
- Which of the three ways of doing this exercise was the easiest for you? Why? How important is feedback in communication?
- Which of the three ways of doing this exercise was the hardest? Could we have done this with a blind person? A deaf person?
- In what ways did you establish a relationship with your partner? How was that helpful?

If time permits, have the group examine some of these additional questions:

- In what ways do we communicate with our eyes (winks, smiles, tears)?
- What about body language? Can you really tell something about a person by the way they sit or stand? Can you demonstrate? Show me, without words or touching, that you like the person next to you. Show me you dislike them. Show me you are bored. Show me you are impatient.
- Can language be a hindrance to communication? How? (**Examples:** If you don't know what an isosceles triangle is, how can you draw one? When I say, "I love you" to my Mom, it means something completely different than when I say it to my boyfriend or girlfriend.)

Sometimes we think we understand exactly what is being asked of us or what we are being told to do. But we must always be careful to listen closely and to ask the right questions. Remember when Jesus tells the disciples that, on the last day, we will be judged for the times we have fed him, clothed him, given him a sip of water. It is the wise student that asks, "When did we see *you*?" The wise question opens the door to the truth. In this case, Jesus reminds them, ". . . Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (*Matthew 25:40*)

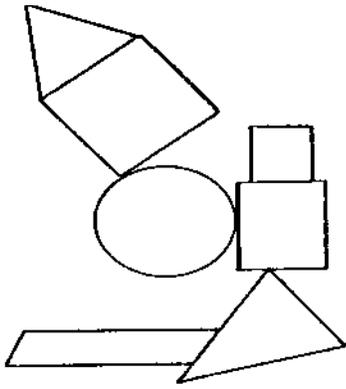
We need to be willing to ask. When we don't understand, we must say so. That is the quickest avenue to grace.

Closure

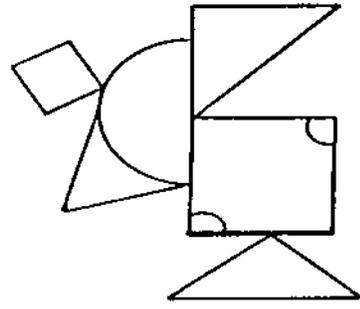
Read Psalm 119:105-112. Have the participants look it up both in a Bible and in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Closing Prayer

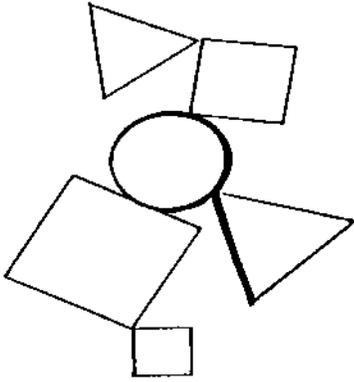
Gracious God, make us clear—clear thinkers, careful listeners, clear communicators. We offer to you all the things we know and all the things we don't know. Help us to be faithful to the gifts you give us; and in the name of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, we will give you thanks for the lessons that we learn. *Amen*.



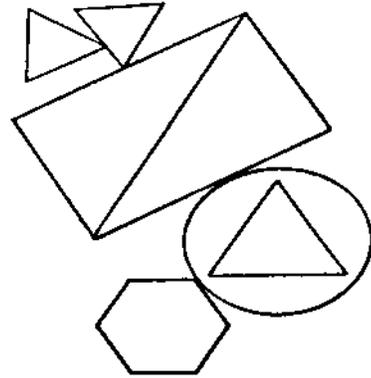
1A



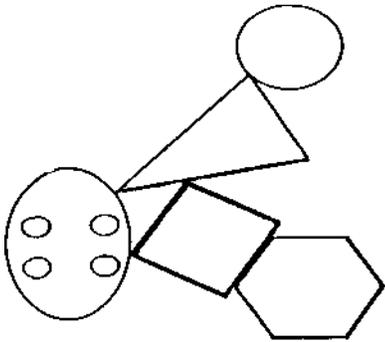
1B



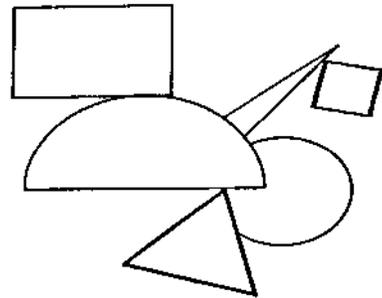
2A



2B



3A



3B

Litany of Dedication

This is the opening ritual prayer for J2A, to be used as a part of the J2A curriculum. It may be used in conjunction with the dinner party celebration, or as a separate experience. We recommend this litany be used as part of a celebration of Holy Eucharist. **Please note: This liturgy may only be used as a part of the overall *Journey to Adulthood* program by parishes holding a current license.**

- Celebrant* *Where have you been?*
Youth I have been in my childhood.
- Celebrant* *Who was with you there?*
Youth I was with my family.
- Celebrant* *Are you men and women?*
Youth We are men and women because of God's free gift to us.
- Celebrant* *Who are you now?*
Youth We are no longer children. We are becoming what God intends us to be.
- Celebrant* *What does God intend for you?*
Youth God intends for us to grow into the full stature of Christ; to become adult men and women ready to assume adult responsibilities.
- Celebrant* *Who will go with you?*
Youth We will go together.
- Celebrant* *Are you ready to begin?*
Youth With God's grace we will begin together.
- Celebrant* *Are you ready for the journey?*
Youth With God's grace, we will journey together.
- Celebrant* *Are you strong enough?*
Youth With God's grace, we will strengthen each other. In the face of adversity, in the season of joy, in our weakness, in our sorrow, in our triumph and in our defeat we will stand together.
- Celebrant* *What if you change?*
Youth By God's grace, we will all be changed.
- Celebrant* *What if you are bruised and wounded?*
Youth We will care for each other and our wounds will heal.
- Celebrant* *Who stands with you, in your midst and in your hearts?*
Youth The Lord of Hosts is with us.
- Celebrant* *The Lord be with you.*

Youth
Celebrant

And also with you.
Let us pray.

God our Father, you see your children growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Young Persons
Book of Common Prayer, page 829

LITANY OF OFFERING AND SACRIFICE

PLEASE NOTE: Liturgies that are part of the *Journey to Adulthood* program may not be used separately from the program. A license is required to use the following litany.

Celebrant *Lord, before we were born, you knew our names.*
Parents Gracious God, you are the author and the finisher of our lives.

Celebrant *In the best moments, you stand in our midst rejoicing.*
Parents Gracious God, you are the protector of our dreams.

Celebrant *In our failures, you stand in our midst, to comfort and console us.*
Parents Gracious God, you are our true and abiding friend.

Celebrant *In all that we possess, we see your generosity.*
Parents Gracious God, you give to us from your bounty.

Celebrant *We offer to you our most precious memories.*
Parents Gracious God, receive them as a holy sacrifice.

Celebrant *We offer to you our fondest dreams.*
Parents Gracious God, receive them as a holy sacrifice.

Celebrant *Lord, you tell us in your Holy Scriptures that our prayers ascend to your throne*
as sweet incense. As the smoke ascends from this our offering pyre, hear us as we
pray.
Parents Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Celebrant *O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son:*
Look with compassion on the whole human family (especially our young people who
on this night offer themselves to you and to each other); take away the arrogance and
hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in
bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your
purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in
harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the Human Family

Book of Common Prayer, page 815

Please note: This liturgy may only be used as a part of the overall *Journey to Adulthood* program by parishes holding a current license.

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YAC LITURGIES

Commitment to Christian Ministry
The Celebration of Adulthood

YAC SESSIONS

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Discernment
Choosing a Mentor
Spiritual Gifts
Mission Project
My Credo

APPENDIX

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Reincorporation of Pilgrims

The following material is for both YAC advisors and J2A leaders

Transition from J2A to YAC

After the pilgrimage, the pilgrims need to be reincorporated into the life of the congregation. The transition from J2A to YAC begins with a way for youth to share what they have experienced on their pilgrimage. This might take several forms but should be more than just a show and tell. It needs to include sharing spiritual experiences, teaching or leading the congregation in what they learned or experienced, celebrating, thanking the congregation for their support, giving back to the congregation, etc. Some suggestions:

- II The group could plan a mini-pilgrimage in your church, designating different rooms as specific sites. The congregation would travel from one to another, with guides. When they arrived in a room, a team of youth would tell them about that site and introduce them to something they learned or experienced on pilgrimage. They might do a prayer meditation experience. Or teach them a Taize chant. Or lead a Bible study. If you have a large group attending, you could stretch it over time with different groups going to different rooms at the same time. A central gathering place could be where the groups go to “wait for the bus” to the next destination, etc.
- II The group could lead a quiet day at the church, retreat center or your diocesan camp. You might invite others from neighboring congregations.
- II The group could prepare and print a book of photos, descriptions, Bible studies, meditations, etc. that the congregation could use at home during Advent.
- II The group might lead a series of services for the children, families, the whole congregation or a special service on Sunday night that included a sermon, small group discussion, private mediation time, music they learned, etc.

Each of these suggestions combines the aspect of telling about where we went with sharing what we experienced in a way that enables members of the congregation to learn from and/or experience a small bit of it. Be creative. Encourage the youth to think of more than just one thing to do. Help them think about ways to thank those who helped them raise money or supported them on their pilgrimage. Inspire them to do individual, personal acts as well as something by the whole group. Allow them to form teams and do different things. Do whatever works for your group and the members of it. The leadership for this should be a team comprised of the J2A leaders and the pilgrimage leaders. This will feel like, and logically is, an extension of J2A and should be scheduled as soon after the pilgrimage as is feasible. This might be in the summer months or early in the fall.

The shift from pilgrimage to YAC occurs after the pilgrimage group has done at least their major presentation to the congregation. This transition includes the J2A leaders and the YAC advisors. The goal of this time is to say “goodbye” to the J2A leaders and to launch the YAC group with their new leaders.

Once the event or events celebrating pilgrimage are complete, the J2A leaders join the youth in a ceremony in which they “turn over” the youth to the YAC mentors. This can be an informal group

session or something more structured. A suggested liturgy to be led by the youth is provided. You will need to give this to the group the week prior to this meeting so they can decide who will do what. The important elements are:

- A time to give thanks for their time together
- For the J2A leaders (and pilgrimage chaperones) to express their appreciation, tell stories, etc.
- For the youth to respond
- A time for youth-led prayer that gives thanks for the gifts and ministry of the leaders and asks God to bless them as they leave
- A time for the youth and leaders to say “good-bye” individually
- A definite departure of the leaders
- A time for the YAC mentors and youth to begin a new relationship with each other

The following format is provided as one way to do the above.

PLEASE NOTE: This liturgy may only be used as part of the *Journey to Adulthood* program with a current license.

Ending and Beginning Again

The J2A leaders gather the group and find a way to express their appreciation for their time together. This can include telling stories, naming significant moments and talking about how the experience has impacted them and their faith. They tell the YAC advisors about the youth they are passing into their hands and their hopes for the YAC group.

The youth are invited to respond in whatever manner they choose. When they are finished, they form a circle around the leaders (the YAC advisors stay outside the circle) and the youth lead the group in the following prayers or their own personal prayers. These prayers can be led by a couple of youth, or each sentence can be prayed by a different young person.

Prayer(s) of Thanksgiving

God, we give you thanks for _____, _____, and _____ who have been our leaders the past two years. We thank you for their time and devotion to us, for their care and concern for us. We thank you for what we have learned from them. We thank you for the faith they have shared with us. We thank you for the tough times and the times they were tough with us! We thank you for the gifts you have given them and the love you have shown to us in and through them.

Prayer(s) of Blessing

And now, holy God, we ask you to bless them. Fill them with your Holy Spirit. Give them an awareness of our love and your love for them. Be with them as they leave our group and this ministry. Call them into new ministries and new relationships and let those ministries and relationships be a blessing to them. Give them a good memory so they will remember us and continue to be a part of our lives! Bless their going out and their coming in. Bless their lives and those they love. Bless them now and evermore. **AMEN!**

Young Person: May God's peace go with you!

The circle opens to the YAC advisors. One of the J2A leaders says to the YAC mentors:

We commend these young people to you. They are now ready to take their place with you as young adults. You will not be their leaders, you will be advisors and mentors who walk with them. They are ready to work with you to identify and exercise their ministries and vocation. We thank you for being a part of their lives and we pledge you our prayers and support in the years ahead.

The leaders form a line so the young people and leaders can say goodbye individually. As each young person finishes the line he or she joins the YAC advisors. The group assembles and is seated. When the last young person has said goodbye, the J2A leaders leave the room together.

The YAC advisors welcome the young people and invite them to introduce themselves and say something about what they feel they'd like to do in the next two years. The advisors also introduce themselves and talk about what YAC is about, the goals and the liturgies. This time of sharing might end with food and/or be followed by a social event in which the youth and their new mentors can begin to build relationships with each other.

Introducing YAC

Materials Needed

- ◁ A binder with all of the YAC materials in it plus the Annotated Resources section for each advisor and participant
- ◁ You may eventually need two binders for the group: one copy of the Rite-13 lesson plans and one with the J2A lesson plans (omit introductory materials). This is needed if the group chooses to re-visit lesson plans—e.g., they may want to review the prayer lessons in J2A, or refer to them if they did not use them during J2A.

Introduction

The YAC program marks a shift in how you will work together as youth and advisors. During YAC, the youth will take on increasing leadership responsibilities. The adults will be advisors or mentors. The advisor/mentor role is to help by asking lots of questions; nudging when the group gets off track; answering questions (often by pointing out where the answers can be found); and especially providing lots of encouragement when the going gets tough, boring, or confusing. The youth lead the opening and closing prayers for all sessions and the scripture reflection.

How to start the initial Sunday morning meetings

Begin by using one of the Guiding Scriptures for YAC (below) spend a few minutes discussing it. You can use Lectio Divina (see Rite-13 directions), one of the Bible study methods described in *The Doubleday Pocket Bible Guide* (available from LeaderResources) or from *In Dialogue With Scripture* (available from Episcopal Parish Services), or those included in the YAC Appendix. Start each session with a prayer made up by a young person or from the *Book of Common Prayer* (or your denominational worship book). After you have done the Guiding Scriptures for YAC, you can decide if you want to use the Sunday lessons (e.g., the Gospel lesson of the day) or if you want to read Sunday by Sunday through a book of the Bible. After you decide what scriptures you will use, decide who will lead each week's reflection time, and either decide on a method together or decide that the leader will use a method of his or her choosing.

Guiding Scriptures

- Jacob wrestling with the angel (*Genesis 32:1-32*)
- O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you (*Psalms 63*)
- Your word, O Lord, is a lantern to my feet and a light upon my path (*Psalms 119:105*)
- Varieties of gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:1-31*)
- The sending of the seventy (*Luke 10:1-20*)

Review the goals

Write the following goals on newsprint and discuss them enough to make sure everyone understands them. Then post the newsprint in some prominent place in your meeting space so you can remind yourself of these goals regularly. One of you might want to print them from a computer and create an attractive poster—especially nice if you are meeting in a room that others will be using as well. It looks a lot better than a sheet of newsprint on the wall!

Goals

- Exercise responsibility, partnership and leadership in the life of the congregation.

- Exercise good stewardship—tangible giving of our time, talent and treasure—to all of God's people.
- Design and lead a mission/service project.
- Discern and undertake a ministry in the congregation or community.
- Achieve clarity about what we believe and what we can and will make as a public commitment.
- Take responsibility for the maintenance of the group life—setting meeting times, designating leaders, setting up a communication network, establishing group norms and goals.
- Lay a foundation of personal disciplines to carry us along our faith journey.
- Function as assistants, counselors, and advisers to the Rite-13 group or work with the younger children as needed.

Check expectations

Before you proceed, explain that these goals are the goals set by the program developers. However, the group may want to add to these goals. One way to do that is to ask what they think worked and what did not work in Rite-13 and J2A. Write their responses on newsprint using one (or more) sheets for the “what worked” list and another for the “what didn’t work” list. When the list is completed, start a new sheet of newsprint and ask them what hopes and expectations they have for YAC. What would they like to do? What do they hope to learn? Since they *will* be in charge, what would they do differently?

It is possible (yea, even likely!) that you will get some frivolous answers to these questions. Just write them down. And say “anything else?” Wait. At some point you can say something like, “let’s list everything we want, no matter how far out it may seem, because at the end we will pick those things we plan to do.” The advantage of getting all the crazy ideas out is that they usually contain the germ of the best ideas you will come up with. So don’t discourage either far out or mundane ideas. Make sure the group allows anything and everything to go onto the list.

Reviewing the next few weeks

Distribute the binders with the YAC materials in them. If you made Rite-13 and J2A binders, agree on where you will store them. Explain that the group can select lessons they might not have done (most groups skip several of the lessons) or they might want to re-do some of them (e.g., the one on gifts and skills when they are selecting leaders); and they can use them as models if they choose to develop their own lesson plans.

Setting Norms

Ask the group to set norms. They should have done this in Rite-13 and J2A, but you may need to review what a norm is (an agreed-upon way of behaving when we are together). You may need to “jump start” them by asking them to decide on when, where, and how often they will meet; whether they care about starting on time or ending on time; whether they will bring food, provide food from their group budget, or not eat during meetings, etc. Pull out the section on norms from the Rite-13 material and have it available for reference. Whatever else is on the list, make sure that the basic norms of a learning community are present:

- ◁ Mistakes and problems encountered are welcomed as opportunities for learning.
- ◁ We will learn from each other, our experiences together, and from anyone or any source that can help us learn.

The purpose and structure of YAC

The last couple of years of high school is the time when young people naturally begin to look to the future and ask themselves: “Who am I? What will I be and do when I leave home? Where will I go?”

They begin to exercise their independence. Most have cars or a means of transportation and the freedom to begin traveling on their own. They may have jobs and are earning and managing their own money. Many are looking at colleges and deciding where they attend, what they will major in or even what career they will pursue. Developmentally, they are settling into the beliefs and behaviors that they will have as adults. In a short time, they will go off and have to function in society as independent adults.

YAC focuses on the issues that are already engaging youth. There are two primary foci:

- Year I: Who has God called me/formed me to be? What am I called to be/do? What are my spiritual gifts, my vocation, my ministry?
- Year II: What do I believe? What commitment am I prepared to make? How can I best make a public affirmation of what I believe and what I am committed to be and do?

The group as a whole will design and lead a mission or service project. Youth who have spent two years on understanding and building Christian community, followed by two years focusing on adulthood skills and a pilgrimage, will now spend two (or three) years focusing on mission, ministry and beliefs.

Older youth are best engaged by doing ministry. So each young person will be encouraged to identify at least one ministry in the congregation or community he or she will engage in. An adult mentor, already engaged in that ministry, will be asked to mentor them in how to do the ministry and to reflect on it. In some cases, teams or even groups of youth may choose to engage in the same ministry. They may even start and/or lead a ministry that engages members of the congregation. These experiences of ministry can help young people begin to reflect on their vocations—that infamous “What will I be when I grow up?” question.

The other focus is on what I believe, what I stand for and what I’m prepared to make a public adult lifetime commitment to. These questions will culminate in a ceremony at the end of YAC which serves as a rite of passage into adulthood. Some youth may choose this as an appropriate time for Confirmation or Reaffirmation.

YAC is about being a *young adult*—a time to test your wings. This means youth taking their place in the congregation and community *as adults*. Everyone understands that young adults still have their training wheels on and will make mistakes, change their minds and occasionally resist being adult. But YAC is a time to practice adulthood without having to be totally there yet!

Before the *Journey to Adulthood* program, almost 80% of the youth left the church within eight months of confirmation. Now that most congregations have moved the age of confirmation to 16, we find that young people still are leaving within a few months after confirmation or after their pilgrimage. We believe this is true for several reasons:

- II Confirmation still feels like graduation.
- II There is not a good transition from J2A/Pilgrimage to YAC.
- II YAC has not had a powerful opening or closing liturgy—there was no specific rite of passage into adulthood.
- II YAC needed more focus. The original YAC material provided many diverse options. While some youth have been able to build their own program, many find the options in YAC too diffuse. The lack of a concrete goal makes it difficult for youth to see why they should hang around.
- II Youth in the last two years of high school tend to relate best to mission activities—they want to do something, to make a difference.

After several years of experience, we now have a sense of what may have staying power for older youth. The following is what we have learned:

- ☐ It is important to have the YAC group participate in a rite of passage that launches them as adults. This liturgy requires preparation, commitment and the participation of at least one adult mentor per young adult.
- ☐ YAC groups need to have a specific task or goal to complete:
- ☐ Each young person chooses a ministry to exercise within the congregation or community and chooses (with assistance from the YAC mentor team) a personal mentor who is engaged in this ministry or has some relevant experience to share.
- ☐ Each group develops at least one mission project. Like the pilgrimage, this probably will take about two years to plan and might include a trip (preferably nearby so cost does not preclude anyone from participating....unless this group's pilgrimage was nearby). The group is encouraged to develop a project that engages the congregation in addition to themselves.
- ☐ Each young person develops a personal *credo* during these two years. This credo can take any form but expresses:
 - ☐ Who am I? Who did God create me to be?
 - ☐ What do I believe? What or to whom am I prepared to commit to? What do I understand that to mean?
- ☐ YAC needs to end with a rite of passage into full adulthood that recognizes that the youth are now going to be “on their own” in college, a training program or at a job.

So, there are three main projects in YAC:

- ☐ A mission project
- ☐ The ministry (or ministries) exercised by each young person
- ☐ The credo developed by each young person

While these will all be worked on simultaneously, the first step is to identify the ministry each young person will be engaged in and a mentor in that ministry to work with him or her. So, the first sessions after getting acquainted will be focused on spiritual gifts and ministry. Suggestions for sessions are provided but each group will need to develop a process that works for them.

Commitment to Christian Ministry

OK, this is what the young people have been waiting for. “When do I get to say I’m an adult?” Youth who have completed the Rite-13 liturgy clearly understand that they are no longer children. But we tell them they must earn adulthood and the task of the J2A group is to teach them adulthood skills. Now we need to clearly say, “This is the point at which you become an adult.” YAC is that transition point—the point at which the practice adulthood skills and take on adult roles and responsibilities for these two years concluding with a celebration of their adulthood.

Once each group member has identified a ministry and a mentor (see Session Suggestions on selecting a mentor), the group is ready for the Commitment to Christian Ministry. This is likely to be in January or February of the first year of YAC—a good time as it is a time of new starts, it is a slow season in the church and it provides enough time for the transition from pilgrimage to YAC to happen and the new YAC group to bond. The Commitment to Christian Ministry is a liturgy in which the youth are launched as young adults and commissioned to do this ministry on behalf of the congregation. The youth also prepare and present a pledge card on which they make a commitment of time, talent and treasure.

It is helpful to spend time discussing stewardship with youth rather than just passing out pledge cards and asking them to fill them out. Make this a meaningful educational experience and help them make it a meaningful commitment to God. Review the congregation's budget and the amount of paid and volunteer work that is part of the life of your congregation. Talk about the tithe, proportional giving and the gift of time and talent. You can do some interesting activities, like taking the number of pledging units and dividing it into the income to see the average pledge and then thinking about income and what percentage that represents. If it is feasible, the youth can ask each pledging unit to anonymously give them their income (usually after taxes). Average that and put together a chart showing what income the church would have if everyone give 1%, 2%, 3%, etc. It usually is quite startling to see how much money we would have for ministry if we gave even a little more.

The commissioning event should be treated with celebration and solemnity. Discuss the liturgy with the group ahead of time. Meet with the young people and their Ministry Mentors before the service to rehearse what will happen. Host a luncheon afterwards for the youth and their mentors (both the YAC advisors and their individual ministry mentors).

Encourage the Ministry Mentors to work with their ministry area to identify a symbol of their ministry to present to the young person(s) taking on that ministry. So, for example, a young man who will be teaching third graders might be presented with a Leader's Guide for the curriculum and art supplies. A young woman who will be working with the pastoral care team at the hospital might be presented with visitation cards she can use in her ministry and a name tag identifying her as a member of the pastoral care team. Use your creativity and engage as large a portion of the congregation as you can. One goal of this is to incorporate the youth into the life and ministry of the congregation by having them take their place alongside of the other adults in the congregation.

After the Commitment to Christian Ministry Ceremony

Many YAC groups meet at a time other than the Sunday School hour. This is especially true if the young people are engaged in various Sunday morning ministries (teaching Sunday School, serving as Readers, shepherding the Acolytes, etc.). Most groups meet either Sunday afternoon or a weekday evening. Food is good and helps build the group comradery. Twice a month is the least you can meet and still expect the group to hold together. Most groups are likely to meet twice a month with an occasional "event day" that combines doing something with some discussion.

Remember that these young people are actively engaged in a ministry, so they are spending time in church—even if it is not with their group. They need the group as an anchor—a safe harbor to which they can return regularly. But they are also out in the church and community as individuals, in pairs or small teams.

YAC sessions in the first year will focus mostly on ministry and vocation. We have included a series of suggested lesson outlines. Unlike Rite-13 and J2A, they are not precisely spelled out and most of them will extend over several sessions. This is deliberate. As much as possible, encourage the group to develop and lead their own sessions. Each group will have its own personality and some may want more input from the group mentors than others. However, the mentor's role is to encourage the group members to take leadership and to engage other members of the congregation in their learning.

In some cases this will emerge naturally. For example, if a YAC member is elected to the Vestry (church governing body), he or she will logically report on activities, carry requests/concerns to the

meetings, lead deputations of youth that want to advocate for something, etc. If other YAC members' ministries are with outreach or service ministries, they would naturally take the lead in organizing mission work by the group and/or congregation. Choir members and Lay Readers might take responsibility for leading liturgical events.

In other situations, a group might choose to rotate leadership, volunteer for roles as they emerge or work in teams. Encourage your group to develop a style that works for them. Remind them that they also can invite other members of the congregation or community to help them with various topics. So, for example, if the group has lots of energy around a topic, perhaps sparked by a current event, they can invite someone to speak to the group on that topic. Encourage them to think about whom to approach, how they might ask them, how they might organize the session and how to express their appreciation to the person. One of the key skills youth at this need to learn are planning and leadership. These skills will be useful to them in the church and in the rest of their lives.

Mission Project

The group needs to begin thinking about and planning their mission/service project as soon as part of their ministry discernment process. This may help some of the young people who may feel torn between wanting to do something outside of the church as well as within the church. They may be able to fill their outside ministry need by participating in the group's mission work.

The service project is designed to do two things: 1) it provide youth an opportunity to do something that helps others and 2) it gives them a key leadership role in the congregation. The service project can be nearby or it can be a mission trip away from home or even to another country (especially if the group's pilgrimage was nearby). It can be one big project or two or three smaller projects. What they do is the group's choice. What is important is that they plan it and engage the congregation in doing it with them. While they may need assistance in doing this, it is important to encourage them to do as much of it on their own as possible. Remember, in another year or so, these young people will be on their own. It is better that they struggle with and learn how to solve the problems involved now, while they have adults with them to help them work through it, than it is to have them freed from that struggle now only to encounter it at a time when few if any adults will be available to help.

Second Year

During the second year, the group will focus on developing their *credos*. This will culminate in the Celebration of Adulthood ceremony which should occur sometime after high school graduation (or its equivalent) and before the young person leaves home or starts the next phase of his or her life. This service (or series of events) should be planned by the youth in consultation with their advisors and the congregation's clergy.

If the youth plan to include Confirmation or a Reaffirmation of Faith as part of this, you will need to coordinate with the bishop. It might be possible to have that part of the ceremony with the bishop on a weekday evening or even in a regional gathering of several YAC groups, and then do the grander Celebration of Adulthood on Sunday morning.

Ideally, youth would be confirmed at this service (it is probably the most age-appropriate time and fits best with the *Journey to Adulthood* program). Realistically, however, most youth will already be confirmed, so they may do a Reaffirmation of Faith which they may choose to do with or without the bishop present. If you do have a bishop presiding at a Confirmation or Reaffirmation, take care to make

it special for youth, rather than blending it in with children and adults being confirmed. The contrast between the level of preparation and participation by the youth vs. others who were prepared by learning content and are participating in the pre-determined liturgy will be confusing to participants and the congregation. Or, the youth-designed event will dominate, and the younger children or adults will end up not fitting in or being “add-ons.” To avoid this, you probably will want to make this a separate event from your regular Confirmation, doing it regionally or on an evening, etc. The suggested way for youth to prepare and participate in this liturgy will make it a powerful experience in their lives and the life of the congregation.

Third Year

Every other year you will have a faithful remnant that will be in YAC for a third year. They will have done the mission trip, exercised their ministry and prepared their Credo. Their older half will have graduated, done their Celebration of Adulthood and left for college, further training or a job. Since the Celebration of Adulthood is best done with the graduating seniors, it means you will have two Celebrations for each group (one after the second year and another at the end of the third year). If it is possible, it would be good for the older half of the group to return to church for the celebration for the second half of the group (which means it will have to be in June or July). Make sure they are invited and encourage them to send greetings, photos, etc. if they can't come.

The group that ends up with a third year of YAC has a couple of choices. They might simply become regular adult members of the church, continuing their ministry and perhaps meeting occasionally. Or, they might meet regularly and work through the optional projects at the end of the YAC manual either by themselves or with the younger adults in the congregation. Many of the optional projects are appropriate for 20-somethings as much as an 18-year old.

Each congregation will need to address this group according to the group members. If it is already clear that the group is going to drift apart, you might want to do the entire group's Celebration of Adulthood together rather than lose the momentum. Or, if they are a mature group, are going to join (or start) a young adults group and function as adults in the congregation and feel they simply want to be adults, then do the Celebration and integrate them into the congregation as adults.

On the other hand, if the second half of the group is strong, you might simply continue the group and do their Celebration of Adulthood at the end of their senior year. If this is the chosen route, it is crucial that they have an adult advisor and a young person who serve as the leaders and convene them regularly. If they don't want to do the projects or any other established “curriculum,” they might just meet socially once a month with a worship time that includes opportunities for them to talk about their life and ministries.

In either case, let the group make the decision. Explain the importance of the “send-off” built into the Celebration of Adulthood and ask them when it they feel it would be best for them.

About the Liturgy

The Celebration of Adulthood should be developed by each individual YAC member or by teams of YAC members, or it may be designed by the entire group. This event should be truly celebratory. In most cases, it will also be a time to say “goodbye” before the young person leaves for college or a job away from home. When a young person will continue to be part of the congregation, it marks the end of “teenaged years” and a recognition of that young person as an adult member of the congregation.

The Celebration of Adulthood contains two key elements:

A way for the young people to say:

- II This is who I am. This is what I believe. This is what I'm doing. This is where I'm going. This is where I feel God leading me.

A way for parents and the congregation to say to each young person:

- II You are now an adult. You are going out on your own. We give you our blessing. We give you our love. We give you the assurance that no matter where you go, God will be with you, God will love you and God will bless you.

Each participant may approach how to do this in different ways. The youth decide what their credo will be—a poem, a hymn, the sermon, a work of art, a dance, a play, a discussion, etc. Each participant should be encouraged to develop a way to say to God and the congregation: “This is who I am. This is what I believe. This is the commitment I make.” This can be but does not need to be complex or elaborate. A very simple, one-paragraph statement can be very powerful.

In addition to the participant's credo, the service should include youth receiving the blessing of their parents (and, perhaps, sponsors, mentors or other significant members of the congregation). Again, this simple act is likely to be very powerful. Young people need to know they have their parents' love and blessing. At this age, they are often not able to ask for that, and there are few ways for parents and children to express that. This is a time when parents can publicly bless their child—an act of sending forth that is as much for them as for their child!

The Celebration of Adulthood is a liturgy the young people design to celebrate their faith and God's call to them. They decide when and where it would occur. Perhaps it is not a single event but a longer celebration, occurring over a week or longer. If some of the young people have not yet been confirmed, this would be an ideal time for confirmation. If all of them have been confirmed, they may want to include the Reaffirmation of Faith. If the celebration is being done over a week or more, it might include a blessing from (or confirmation with) the bishop in the Cathedral on one night (perhaps with other youth from the area) and a celebration with the congregation on another night.

Obviously, preparing for this takes more time and effort than just reading through and discussing an existing liturgy. The second (and third) years are focused on a discussion of what the youth believe. As the Celebration of Adulthood approaches, the group will need to review the Confirmation and Reaffirmation service so they can see how it is structured and what function each part of the service serves. They can then discuss different ways to do the same or similar things. How might we affirm our faith—say what we believe? How might we make or reaffirm our commitment to Christ? What acts or signs would be significant for us? Signing books, lighting candles, singing a special song, taking vows, making statements, giving gifts, praying for an individual by name are all things we do in liturgy.

While the Confirmation service can serve as a model, it is important to encourage the group to find ways to make the service meaningful for them and the congregation. If focusing on Confirmation or Reaffirmation becomes complicated (coordinating with the bishop) or confusing (“We've already been confirmed, why should we do it again?”), shift the focus to creating a service in which they can express their credo, affirm their faith and receive the blessing and sending forth by their parents and the congregation. The idea is to create an experience that will have a significant impact on the young people and the congregation. Do whatever engages the young people in making that happen.

YAC Liturgies

Commitment to Christian Ministry and The Celebration of Adulthood

PLEASE NOTE: These liturgies are part of the Journey to Adulthood program, and may not be used separately from the program or without a current license.

Commitment to Christian Ministry

After the prayers and before the peace, the young adults and their mentors gather facing the Celebrant.

YAC Mentors: N., we have come to welcome these young people as young adults in our church and to commission them for the ministries they have chosen and we have affirmed. We believe they are well-qualified and that they have prayerfully chosen to make this commitment to God and this congregation.

Celebrant: I welcome you in the name of the congregation of N. We receive you as young adults, ready to represent Christ and his Church, to bear witness to him, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world and to take your place in the life, worship and governance of the Church. What ministries do you feel called to exercise in our midst?

Each young person with his or her Ministry Mentor stands before the Celebrant.

Ministry Mentor: N., I present to you N., who has chosen to exercise a ministry of (name or describe the ministry).

The Celebrant addresses the young person.

Celebrant: N., do you, in the presence of this congregation, commit yourself to this trust and responsibility?

Initiate: I do. And I give you this pledge card as a sign of my commitment of time, talent and treasure.

The Initiate presents a pledge card or some other means of making this commitment to the Celebrant or place in the offering plate on the altar.

The Celebrant addresses the Ministry Mentor.

Celebrant: Will you support N. in this ministry of (name or describe the ministry), teaching *him* and learning from *him* as you share in this ministry?

Ministry Mentor: I will.

The Celebrant then lays hands on the young person and says:

May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you, that in this and in all things, you may do God's will in the service of the kingdom of his Christ. *Amen.*

In the name of this congregation I commend you to this work, and pledge you our prayers, encouragement, and support.

The Ministry Mentor presents a symbol of the ministry to the young person.

Ministry Mentor N., take this (symbol of the ministry) and be among us as one who (name the ministry role).

If there are additional young people, each is then presented in turn.

When all have been presented, the Celebrant then addresses the congregation.

Celebrant: Will you who witness the commitment of these young people to these ministries promise to support, uphold and work with them?

Congregation: We will.

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, look with favor upon these young people who have offered their gifts and talents to you and promised to serve in Christ's name. We pray that they may be to us an effective example in work and action, in love and patience and in holiness of life. Give them courage, patience, and vision; strengthen them to witness to the world and to be of service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The service continues with the Peace.

An Order for The Celebration of Adulthood

This rite requires careful preparation by the Priest and other participants.

Gather in the Lord's Name

Proclaim and Respond to the Word of God

The proclamation of the Word may include Scripture lessons or other readings, a Psalm, canticles, hymns, etc. chosen by the youth in consultation with the priest. A reading from the Gospel is always included. The response may include song, talk, dance, instrumental music, other art forms, etc. done by the youth individually, in teams or as a group. This may be in addition to or as their *Credo*.

An Affirmation of Faith

Each participant makes an Affirmation of Faith in a statement of their belief by offering their *Credo* in the manner they prepared and/or by responding to questions such as those posed in the Confirmation service (BCP, p. 415)

Celebrant: Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?

Candidate: I do.

Celebrant: Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

Candidate: I do, and with God's grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.

Pray for the World and the Church

It is appropriate for the prayers to be led by the youth.

Exchange the Peace

Either here or elsewhere in the service, all greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Prepare the Table

The youth prepare the table; the bread, wine and other offerings are placed upon it. It is appropriate for the youth to provide musical and other offerings as they choose.

Make Eucharist

The Great Thanksgiving is said by the Priest in the name of the gathering, using one of the Eucharistic Prayers provided (BCP, pages 402-405). It is appropriate for the youth to surround the altar, standing beside and around the Priest.

Break the Bread

Share the Gifts of God

The Body and Blood of the Lord are shared in a reverent manner. It is appropriate for the youth to assist in the administration of the elements and/or the offering of music or song.

The Blessing

The celebrant gathers the youth and their parents at the altar and charges them to go forth into the world to proclaim the Word of God and carry out the work of the Lord.

The youth individually receive the blessing of their parents (and, if desired, other significant adults). As each young person's blessing is completed, he or she exits down the center aisle, signifying their being sent forth by the congregation.

After all youth have been blessed, the service concludes with a closing prayer similar to that at the end of the Eucharist.

When a common meal or reception is part of the celebration, it follows here.

Understanding Ministry and Vocation

- Goals:** To understand what ministries and vocations are
To learn about ministries and vocations in the congregation and community

This lesson will probably take you several months to complete. The following are suggestions to guide you. You will, however, think of lots of good (even better) ideas to explore this topic (send us your best ideas so we can add them here!). The idea is to learn about ministry and vocation with an eye toward choosing at least one ministry to explore in the next couple of years. This choice of ministry will probably occur somewhere in the first six-eight months of YAC, giving the young people a chance to experience the ministry they have chosen. Choosing a ministry does not mean living with that choice forever or even for a year or more. In the lesson on discernment, you will learn about choosing a ministry and, over time, figuring out if it is the right ministry for you.

What is a “ministry”?

Develop a working definition of ministry that you can post prominently in your meeting space. Use the following to help you come up with a definition you can agree upon.

Look at the section in the catechism about The Ministry (BCP, p. 855):

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given to them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Discuss what you feel each phrase in this description means to you. Talk about times when you saw this happening or people whom you feel are good examples of this. Try to be specific. Watch people around you. When, where and how do you see ministry happening and by whom? Look beyond the usual people and places. Use the following sources to enrich your discussion:

II Search for the word ministry in the Bible and see what verses you can identify

II Look at the definition in *The Doubleday Pocket Bible Guide* (p. 272):

In Hebrew Scripture: the service of priests in the temple. In Christian Scripture: service of all (ordained and laity) on behalf of and in the name of Jesus Christ. It is also used for ministerial functions in the church: teaching, preaching, healing, and so on.

II Look at the definition in *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians* (p. 333):

From the Latin *mini*, “lesser.” The term has the same form as the Latin *magister* form *magis*, “greater” meaning “master” or “teacher.” Ministry appears in the Vulgate translation of Mt. 20:26, “he who would be great [latin, *maior*] among you, let him be your minister,” translating the underlying Greek *diakonos*, “servant,” as “minister.” Thus ministry entered the Christian vocabulary referring to the Christian vocation to serve. Ministry refers to the work and office of the one who ministers. In the NT, all the Corinthians ministered (Greek *diakonein*) to the saints in Jerusalem by their collection of the free-will offering (2 Corinthians 8-9).

- II Look at the definition in *A Dictionary for Episcopalians*, John N. Wall, Cowley Publications (p. 82):

Ministry: the means through which the church carries out its mission, which is “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ” (BCP p. 855). Those with a ministry in the church are “all its members,” ordained and lay.

- II The definition in the *American Heritage Dictionary*: The act of serving; ministration.
- II Look at another question in the Catechism that comes after the definitions of ministry for both clergy and laity (p. 856):

Q. What is the duty of all Christians?

A. The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

- II How is a duty different from a ministry? Does everyone have a ministry as well as a duty?

Ministry and vocation

Develop a working definition of vocation that you can post in your meeting space. Use the following to help you come up with a definition you can agree upon.

- II Look up “vocation” in several dictionaries:
 - II 1. A regular occupation or profession, especially for which one is specially suited or qualified. 2. An urge or predisposition to undertake a certain kind of work, especially a religious career; a calling. [Middle English *vocaciown*, divine call to a religious life, from Old French *vocation*, from Latin *vocatio*, a calling, summoning from *vocare*, to call] *American Heritage Dictionary*
 - II ...vocation is the “calling” one infers from the external and internal signs which evolve over time. Vocation may involve a task or job, but it also concerns a way of life. All Christian vocations—lay or ordained, single or married or religious—are specific expressions of Christian identity rooted in the baptismal covenant. *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians*, Don S. Armentrout, Robert Slocum, editors, Church Publishing.
- II Can a vocation be “in the church” and “in the world?” In other words, is a vocation just church jobs or can teaching, nursing, landscaping, cleaning, running a business be a vocation? What makes it a vocation rather than “just a job”?

II Frederick Buechner speaks about gifts and vocation in *Wishful Thinking* (p. 95) “Vocation. It comes from the Latin *vacare*, to call, and means the work a [person] is called to by God.

There are all kinds of different voices calling you to all kinds of different work, and the problem is to find out what is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest.

By and large a good rule for finding out [what is the voice of God] is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of your work, you’ve presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you’ve missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you’re bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren’t helping your patients much either.

Neither the hair shirt nor the soft berth will do. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.

II What is the difference between vocation and ministry? Keep returning to this question as you explore the rest of the following options. And remember there isn’t an especially clear, neat answer to this question. Vocation tends more toward lifestyle and long-term; ministry often refers more to a specific service work. But the words are often used interchangeably. The goal here is to listen for how you and others in the church use these words and what they really mean.

Who are ministers?

Talk about the difference between lay and ordained ministers. Name, and preferably list on newsprint, the ministries recognized by the church in some formal way. Use the following questions to help guide your discussion over the next few months:

II What lay ministries are there in your congregation? In your community?

II Look at your church directory or other place where congregational leaders are listed. What are the titles or roles identified?

II Observe what happens in your congregation. What ministry roles are assumed, even if they are rarely, if ever, named?

II What ministries do members of your congregation carry out in the community—at home, work, in school, in their neighborhoods, etc.

II What are the qualities and qualifications needed for each ministry?

II What preparation, training or support is or might be needed for each?

ACTIVITY: Invite people from each of the various ministries in your congregation to come and talk with your group about their work. Ask them what they do, why they do it, what gifts, skills and commitment is required, etc. As they talk, think about whether this is a ministry you feel called to explore and think about whether you would like to invite this person to be your mentor.

II Which lay ministries are paid and which are done by volunteers? How does that vary from congregation to congregation?

II What professional (paid, trained, certified, etc.) lay ministries are there in the church?

- II What qualities and qualifications are needed to become a lay professional?
- II What preparation, training or support is needed?

ACTIVITY: Invite lay professionals to come to talk with your group (e.g., organist, Director of Religious Education, Youth Minister, a pastoral caregiver, etc.). Ask them what they do, why they do it, what gifts, skills and commitment is required, etc. Talk about why they choose to work for the church instead of or in addition to working in a secular job.

- II What lay ministries are there in your diocese (synod, conference, presbytery, etc.)?
 - II Read your diocesan paper to see what you can learn.
 - II Get a copy of the Diocesan Journal or other public documents to see what they reveal.
 - II Go to your diocese's website

ACTIVITY: Call or visit your diocesan office to find out. Invite a member of the staff or a governing board member to visit your group and talk about different roles.

- II What lay ministries are there in your national or regional church structures? (A regional structure is called a Province in the Episcopal Church)
 - II Read your national paper. What does it tell you about roles in the national church?
 - II Go to your church's website to see what it tells you.
 - II Find a General Convention Journal (or comparable document that tells you about your church's legislative work). What does it tell you about ministries in the larger church?
 - II Contact your national/regional offices to see what information they have.
 - II How does one become involved in the life and ministry of the church on a regional or national level?

- II Discuss the vocation of those in religious orders. How is their life and ministry similar to and different from that of Christians in families and living singly?
 - II Look at the lesson plan on religious orders in the Episcopal Church in Rite-13.
 - II Are members of a religious order lay or ordained?
 - II Look up some of their websites. What did you learn about their life and work?
 - II Get a copy of *The Rule of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist* (Cowley Publications) and take turns reading and reporting on sections from it.

ACTIVITY: Visit a monastery or convent or invite a member of a religious order to come and talk with you about the religious life as a vocation.

- II What ordained roles are there in the Episcopal Church (or your denomination)?
 - II Look at the Catechism definitions (BCP, p. 855-56):

Q. What is the ministry of a bishop?

A. The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

II Discuss your experience of these three ordained roles.

II What makes them similar to or different from lay roles (volunteer, professional or religious)?

II What preparation is required before someone is ordained? Read the canons of the church and outline the requirements in each of the stages (aspirant, postulant, candidate, ordinand).

II Obtain catalogs from one or more seminaries to see what students study. What life are they being prepared to live? What skills are they being taught?

ACTIVITY Invite one or more clergy (bishop, priest, deacon) to visit your group and talk about what they do, why they do it, what prepared them to do it, what ongoing support they need, etc.



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Workshop Evaluation

Journey to Adulthood

Location _____

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You can help us improve our workshops in the future by filling out this form and turning it in at the end of the day. Thank you very much!

1. The one thing I really wanted to get out of this day was—

2. Was that need met? (Circle one:) YES NO PARTLY
(Details)

3. The most useful thing I learned was—

4. The part I liked best was—

5. The part I liked least was—

6. I wish we had—

7. Additional comments (use back side if necessary):