



# The Journey to Adulthood

A Program of  
Spiritual Formation  
for Young People



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# 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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!*

# 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 a place where they can hear 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 often leaves the Church at age 14 or 15. They leave at the very time in life when they are experiencing the most profound changes in their hearts, minds and bodies they will ever experience. 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 give consent. We have allowed 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 essential 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.

We have to do it, but the good news is that we are remarkably well-equipped for it. The Church is 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 about certain issues 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*.

- Manhood and Womanhood are free gifts from God.
- 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 a young woman. No man is victimized by his hormones - he can stop if he wants to, but God has given him hormones 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 and re-creation of the world. 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 will 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 Structure of the Program**

This 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 Herzer, 2005.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Lesson plans do not have to be done in any particular order. Also, many of these lesson plans will take more than one week to fully explore. Do what works best for your group.

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# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## 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:

1. Bible studies focusing on the lectionary readings (especially the Gospel) for that week
2. A core of lesson plans which focus attention on: Self, Sexuality, Spirituality and Society
3. What's in the News
  - a. Understanding the world in terms of what we are learning in Rite-13
  - b. Watching for examples of how to be an adult Christian in today's world
  - c. Paying attention to careers and other choices of adult men and women
4. Learning to Listen / Learning to Care
  - a. Building relationships with others
  - b. Conversation
  - c. Sharing fellowship and food

Sunday afternoon and weekend sessions cover:

1. Physical activities and games
2. Movies or fun nights out
3. Diocesan or Regional events
4. Service work in the community

*On the following pages is a sample lesson 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 participants read the story of The Calling of Moses (Exodus 3:1-4:20).

To really make the point (and to make the activity more interactive) 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.

Some questions to use with your group:

- Why did God pick Moses specifically?
- Was it random or did Moses have certain gifts?
- Why does God call people generally?
- How does God call people?
- Are there any other examples in Scripture of God calling people?
- Does God still call people today? If so, how?

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 young people find the following passages in their Bibles (a good way to learn where 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 would be like for God speak to you or call you? (One teen said it must be like the voice in *Field of Dreams*: "If you build it, he will come.")
- How are the responses different?
- In what ways are the responses similar?
- 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.

- **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."*
- **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.*
- **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.*
- **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.*
- **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

One goal of Bible study 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:

- **How would you have felt in this situation if you had been Moses?**  
*Possible answers include: Scared. Confident. Like an idiot. Pretty special.*
- **When was the last time you felt like Moses?**
- **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.*
- **Do you think your view of yourself is different from God's view of you?**
- **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.*
- **What two qualities do you especially like about yourself?**
- **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 answering questions, continue with the discussion.

- Is God concerned with your physical characteristics?
- Is God concerned with your personality characteristics?
- Of the two—physical or personality characteristics—which do you think means the most to God? Why?
- Who is your best friend? Do you think God likes him or her better than you? Why or why not?
- 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.*<sup>1</sup>

*This lesson plan includes an optional handout with questions for youth to answer on their own before discussion.*

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

# 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.**

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Lesson plans do not have to be done in any particular order. Also, many of these lesson plans will take more than one week to fully explore. Do what works best for your group.

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# 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 be able to someday fully participate in the adult community as a competent and faithful.

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 answers and to make new-found information useful to the self and others.
- **Partnership**—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 readings (especially the Gospel) for that week
- II. Lesson Plans to prompt discussions on Self, Spirituality, Sexuality and/or Society
- III. Learning to Listen/Learning to Care
  - a. Building relationships with others
  - b. Conversation
  - c. Sharing fellowship and food

### **Special Events/Outings:**

If possible, the group should plan for three special events or trips:

- I. A Lock-In/Overnight in the fall of Year I
- II. An Urban Adventure in the spring of Year I or the fall of Year II
- III. A grand Pilgrimage is planned for the summer following Year II – See the Pilgrimage Manual for more details and help in planning

# LISTENING SKILLS

## LEADER'S GUIDE

### Goal

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

### Area Covered

Self, Society

### Objectives

To practice listening and following directions

To communicate and assess our ability to give and receive precise information

### Equipment Required

Newsprint or blank paper

Markers or pens/pencils

Copies of the drawings (on following pages) – one page for each pair

Timer or watch

Bibles

### Before the Meeting Time

1. Assemble all items needed
2. Make a copy sheet of drawings – if possible, cut sheets in half vertically so all “A” drawings are together and all “B” drawings are together

### Action

Have the group divide itself into pairs. 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. The teams should spread out so that each has a semi-quiet area in which to work. The exercises are timed. The teams have only *three* minutes to complete each exercise.

Exercise #1A: Team members stand back to back. One person is designated as the Describer, the other the Artist. The Describer is given drawing #1A. The Describer then tries to give verbal instructions to the Artist so that the Artist can recreate the drawing. *The Describer can NOT look at the Artist's effort and the Artist must remain silent throughout the process.*

Exercise #1B: After all the teams have accomplished this task (or the allotted time has run out), the team members reverse roles and try the task again with a different drawing. Drawing #1B is given to the new Describer.

Exercise #2A: The basic rules remain the same. However, this time the drawing (#2A) is somewhat more complex, so the teammates stand side by side and the Describer may watch the Artist's effort (although not show them the original drawing). *The Artist may not ask questions and must still remain silent.* 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.

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

Exercise #3A: In this level, there is full and complete communication. The pair stands side by side. The Describer may see the work of the Artist and the Artist may ask any questions for feedback or guidance. Use drawing #3A.

Exercise #3B: 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 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 and talk about which drawing turned out to be most accurate and why.

Gather the whole group back together and talk through some of these questions:

- What made this task difficult?
- Did the accuracy of the drawing have anything to do with drawing ability?
- 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? Did that help?

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? 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 your partner says “Draw an isosceles triangle” and you don’t know what that is, that doesn’t help you.)
- Do the same words (like “I love you”) have different meanings to different people?

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 also 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 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 often the quickest avenue to grace.

## Closure

Read Psalm 119:105-112 together as a group. Have the participants look it up in either the Bible or 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.*

# Litany of Dedication (for teens)

*This is the opening ritual prayer for J2A – it may be used in conjunction with the dinner party celebration, or as a separate experience. Some groups find it meaningful to do this litany more than once, using it periodically together during the 2 years of J2A. We recommend following this litany with communion, when possible.*

**Please note: This liturgy may only be used as a part of the overall J2A program by parishes holding a current license.**

<i>Celebrant</i>	Where have you been?		in our weakness, in our sorrow, in
<i>Youth</i>	I have been in my childhood.		our triumph and in our defeat we
			will stand together.
<i>Celebrant</i>	Who was with you there?		
<i>Youth</i>	I was with my family.	<i>Celebrant</i>	What if you change?
		<i>Youth</i>	By God's grace, we will all be
<i>Celebrant</i>	Are you men and women?		changed.
<i>Youth</i>	We are men and women because		
	of God's free gift to us.	<i>Celebrant</i>	What if you are bruised and
			wounded?
<i>Celebrant</i>	Who are you now?	<i>Youth</i>	We will care for each other and
<i>Youth</i>	We are no longer children. We are		our wounds will heal.
	becoming what God intends us to be.		
		<i>Celebrant</i>	Who stands with you, in your
<i>Celebrant</i>	What does God intend for you?		midst and in your hearts.
<i>Youth</i>	God intends for us to grow into the	<i>Youth</i>	The Lord of hosts is with us.
	full stature of Christ; to become		
	adult men and women ready to	<i>Celebrant</i>	The Lord be with you.
	assume adult responsibilities.	<i>Youth</i>	And also with you.
<i>Celebrant</i>	Who will go with you?	<i>Celebrant</i>	Let us pray.
<i>Youth</i>	We will go together.		God our Father, you see your children growing up in
			an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that
<i>Celebrant</i>	Are you ready to begin?		your ways give more life than the ways of the
<i>Youth</i>	With God's grace, we will begin		world, and that following you is better than chasing
	together.		after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a
			measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new
<i>Celebrant</i>	Are you ready for the journey?		start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you,
<i>Youth</i>	With God's grace, we will journey		and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through
	together.		Jesus Christ our Lord. <i>Amen.</i>
<i>Celebrant</i>	Are you strong enough?		
<i>Youth</i>	With God's grace, we will		
	strengthen each other. In the face		
	of adversity, in the season of joy,		

*Prayer for Young Persons*  
*Book of Common Prayer, page 829*

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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:

- The group could plan a mini-pilgrimage in your church, designating different rooms as specific sites, where church members can travel to each room with guides. In each room, teens would tell them about that site and introduce something they experienced on pilgrimage – a prayer meditation, a song or Taize chant, a short Bible study, a new food they discovered, etc.. If you have a large group attending, you could have 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.
- The group could lead a quiet day at the church, retreat center or your diocesan camp. You might invite others from neighboring congregations.
- The group could prepare and print a book of photos, descriptions, Bible studies, meditations, etc. that the congregation could use at home during Advent.
- The group might lead services for children, families, or the whole congregation 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 J2A pilgrimage to YAC occurs after the pilgrimage group has done their presentation to the congregation. This transition includes both 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 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 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 “A Liturgy for Ending and Beginning Again” is provided as one way to do the above.

## **A Liturgy for 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.

### **Prayers 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.

### **Prayers 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!**

**J2A Group:** May God's peace go with you!

The circle opens to the YAC advisors and the J2A leaders say 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 new 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 teen 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—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 (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 to 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:

- Confirmation still feels like graduation.
- There is not a good transition from J2A/Pilgrimage to YAC.
- YAC has not had a powerful opening or closing liturgy—no specific rites of passage included
- YAC needed more focus. The original 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.
- 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 you use this option, 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:**

1. A way for the young people to say: *“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.”*
2. A way for parents and the congregation to say to each young person:  
*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.