



**Developing and Deepening Youth and Family Ministry
A Resource Developed for the Congregations**

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and the

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GET DRENCHED:

Developing and Deepening Youth and Family Ministry

A Resource Developed for the Congregations

Every structure needs a solid foundation. Hard work has been going on in the New England Synod over the past two years to create a strong foundation for the work of youth and family ministry.

Please take time to review the new resource, *Get Drenched: Developing and Deepening Youth and Family Ministry*, that has been produced by Steve Kennedy, Heidi Jacoby, Pr. Liz Eide and other members of the Get Drenched Team. You will identify the core values for this important ministry, be guided into resources and activities for developing the ministry in your congregation, and grow in understanding of the ways to keep youth connected to their baptism and to the church.

What is new and different about this approach? Essentially it takes faith formation more seriously, emphasizes the importance of care and renewal for leaders, provides better resources for networking, and incorporates a deep understanding of the present youth culture. I recommend this resource highly.

The Get Drenched Team has done an incredibly faithful and thorough job of tackling the task of providing assistance to congregations for the critical work of youth and family ministry. I hope that you will take the time to read and reflect on this resource, use it in your own setting, and stay in touch with the synod's team as you "Dive in" to this newly effective compilation of tools for faith relationship with our young people and families.

Bishop Margaret G. Payne

"This new resource is soaked in baptism--baptism's gifts and themes as the wellspring for beginning ministry, or renewing ministry, or strengthening ministry with young people. This baptismal centering for youth ministry is an excellent "primary sourcing," and the team that has created *Get Drenched* has done good work to make this clear and accessible for a wide range of folks and congregational settings. In combination with the Web tools and coaching/encouragement available at www.getdrenched.org, I think you, and your congregation's ministries with young disciples, can be walking wet right away!

Rev. Bill Bixby, Director for Youth Ministry, ELCA

Acknowledgements

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The team consists of co-chairs Rev. Liz Eide and Heidi Jakoby. Thanks to them and all the team members who have been involved throughout this process: Amanda Anderson, Rev. Sara Anderson, Karl Ogren, Rev. Carl Sharon, Rev. Andrew Simon, Rev. Stephanie Smith, and Kristen Swan. For a current list of team members check our website at: <http://www.getdrenched.org/team.htm>.

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Table of Contents

Get Drenched: Core Values for Ministry	- 1 -
The Beginning Work.....	- 1 -
Get Drenched: Resource Activities	- 4 -
Using this Resource	- 4 -
“Dive In” and Make a Difference: Sometimes it’s the “Little Things”	- 5 -
“Refresh”: Ministry with a Little Zest	- 10 -
“Equip”: You Want Me to Do What?	- 16 -
“Network”: Connecting to the Source	- 21 -
“Celebrate”: See the Marvelous Work!	- 26 -
“Hope”: What’s Left?	- 32 -
“Empower”: Hand it Over.....	- 37 -
“Disciple”: You Are Not Alone.....	- 42 -
Jumping into the Pool: 5 Small Youth Ministry Leaps.....	- 47 -
Selective Reading Suggestions	- 58 -

Get Drenched: Core Values for Ministry

By the New England Synod's Get Drenched Team
for Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry

The Beginning Work

In 2005, the New England Synod pulled together stakeholders in youth and young adult ministry from throughout the synod to begin discerning direction for this ministry. Early conversations, encouraged by recent work by Dr. Roland Martinson, led the team to focus on discovering and developing a series of core values that were important for healthy and vital youth ministry. This process yielded great conversation and excitement for the future of Youth and Family Ministry in New England. It is often hard to translate the hours of discussions and ideas into something that can be placed into the hands of ministry leaders. It means that the visionaries behind the process are often far down the road inviting and encouraging the rest to catch up. Discovering a way to honor current healthy ministries, while also trying to challenge them, was important to communicating the potential of youth ministry in the congregation. It became equally important to find a way to help congregations enter the journey on their own, in their own context, and at their own pace. The process of discovery is only now beginning with great strides and accomplishments being added daily to the ministry that this team of devoted leaders continues to provide.

In the midst of the planning for the 2006 synod assembly, the team discovered a great way to fuse the sense of doing youth ministry with the sacrament of baptism, the primary entry point for children into the church's family. Looking back at that decision it is hard to believe how completely appropriate the choice was to **Get Drenched**. The result was a unique statement of the core values identified by the team that could be applied to congregational ministry.¹ So, it's time to **GET DRENCHED!**

DRENCHED is an acronym for a series of 8 core values identified to aid the development of Youth and Family Ministry.

"D" = "Dive In"

There are plenty of excuses we might use to avoid involvement in ministry with children, youth, and/or young adults. The reality is that all of us know a child, teenager, young adult or family in our congregation. **"Dive in"** to the lives of the names and faces that come to mind as you think about the young people you come into contact with each week. Try to see yourself as critical people in their faith development because whether you are aware of it or not, you are already involved in some way with people in these age groups. The team wants to be able to **dive in** to your life as well, in order to support and nurture you in this amazing ministry.

¹ The outline here is adapted from the presentation given by the Drenched Team at the New England Synod Assembly, 2006, Worcester, MA.

“R” = “Refresh”

Leaders around the synod candidly talked about what they need for this ministry. A recurring theme is spiritual nurture. We as leaders need to be spiritually refreshed and renewed on a regular basis so that we have a spiritual life to share with kids, young adults, and families. Faithful relationships with each other begin with a faith-filled relationship with God. The team’s goal is to help you discover the resources you need to be refreshed to open you to the amazing work of God through your gifts and ministry.²

“E” = “Equip”

Navigating the incredible amount of ministry tools available for children, youth, young adult, and family ministry can be overwhelming. To that end, the team maintains a website, www.getdrenched.org, that collates web-links and other resources for ministry. Training opportunities are additionally planned to further equip leaders young and old for ministry.

“N” = “Network”

Why go crazy trying to re-create the wheel when someone’s already done it? Likewise, why go crazy trying to invent a new Junior High or VBS program when someone’s already done it? An ongoing process of collecting information concerning the who, what, when, and where and why of great youth, young adult, and family ministries already happening in New England allows the team and others to connect to one another. Information cards allow the team to discover who is doing ministry throughout the synod and what their primary ministry areas are as well as how long they have been involved in ministry. These are tools that aid in bringing leaders together as questions arise and possibilities for ministry appear. Knowing where synod leaders are helps to send out information specific to your context, or to alert you to a workshop, concert, or other ministry opportunity in your area.

“C” = Celebrate

There are already great ministries happening in our synod. All over New England there are amazing adults who come alongside of a youth or young adult in their congregation and cultivated a relationship with that young person through which they’ve become a key part of their faith development. That’s worth celebrating!!

New England has wonderful Campus Ministries located throughout the synod, a great outdoor ministry in Camp Calumet (www.calumet.org), the annual gathering at Hammonasset (www.nesynod.org/youth/hammonasset.html), and the continued leadership development sponsored through Project Connect (www.projectconnect.org). Giving thanks to these ministries and finding ways to increase the awareness of their presence is accomplished through regular

² An aspect of this value was the establishment of a spiritual renewal retreat for leaders that is anticipated to be an annual event (with the hope that it can be offered twice a year in different parts of the synod). Devotional resources can be found on the Get Drenched blog site (<http://getdrenched.wordpress.com/>), and renewal resources on the team’s website (www.getdrenched.org), are intended to provide resources for leaders.

emails and website updates as well as through interaction on our blog site: <http://getdrenched.wordpress.com/>. We continuously celebrate the wonderful work already being done in Christ's name all over New England.

"H" = "Hope"

The team firmly believes that God is leading and guiding our work and yours. As we get to know the people involved in this ministry all over our synod, we are filled with great hope for the present and the future!

"E" = "Empower"

We not only have amazing leaders in this synod, we have amazing youth and young adults! They are filled with gifts for ministry. We hope that you'll get to know them, help them discern their gifts, and find a place for them to use their gifts within your congregations. You will be glad you did.

"D" = "Disciple"

Jesus said to his disciples, "Go and make more disciples! Teach them my ways of loving and living in the world. Serve them with humility. And lead them to the baptismal waters where forgiveness and mercy will change their lives forever."³

We hope you will join us in intentionally serving, teaching, and leading youth, young adults and families through the baptismal waters of life. Living in the waters of baptism is what this is all about – and when you wade in to these waters, you're bound to get drenched! We hope you get drenched in the Spirit as you encounter these ministries! And we hope this resource encourages you to discover your congregation's unique approach to ministry with and through children, youth, young adults, and families.

³ Paraphrase of Mathew 28:19-20.

Get Drenched: Resource Activities

By the New England Synod's Get Drenched Team
for Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry

Using this Resource

This section allows you to gather a group from your congregation to explore each of the 8 core values outlined by the Get Drenched Team. The section begins with a brief devotion that you may wish to read as a group before jumping in to the activity. The devotion tries to provide a personal perspective on each of the core values presented in this resource. You may wish to share the story provided and then allow people to share their own stories of how this particular core value has played out in their lives. Be sure to keep the group focused on the specific core value (use the focus question as a guide if necessary).⁴

Each section allows your group to discover the core value within your congregation. A **Focus** question allows you a quick way to reference the point of the activity. **Objectives** guide you to achieve the goal of the activity. The **Bible Basis** provides a quick reference for the scriptural focus of the activity (and is the passage inspiring the opening devotion). A quick overview of **Materials** for the session lists everything you will need for the activity to follow. **Defining the Core Value** is a quick summary of the meaning behind the core value being explored in the activity. **Group Work**, an **Activity**, and **Discussion** sections follow. Make sure you give people ample time to respond to each activity and question.⁵ **Developing a Plan** provides a suggestion for next steps you can take as a group. Included at the end of each core value section is some space for your group to reflect on **Things You Discovered** during this process with space to record your action plan. Be sure to include a moment of **Prayer** during the activity for people to respond in this way (you may wish to open the time with prayer as well).

Honor the comments of the group during your discussion, but keep people focused on positive expressions of ministry and the assets that your congregation has to offer. Remember, everything you need for great ministry is already in your congregation in some way. This series of activities is a tool that will lead you to discover the ways your congregation can develop healthy ministry with children, youth, young adults, and families.

⁴ The core value activities do not have to be completed in the order in which they appear. Feel free to use and adapt the material here to your own congregation's context. Maintaining some flexibility in your time together will enhance the end result.

⁵ There are no time limits for activities, but most will take 10-15 minutes. In leading your discussion, be comfortable with silence as people take time to reflect on the question. Do not rush the process along.

D

“Dive In” and Make a Difference: Sometimes it’s the “Little Things”⁶

*“Someone is on the way who is so much more able than me. I’m not fit to untie his sandals.
I’ve dipped you in the water, but he will drench you with God’s Spirit.”
(John 1:26-27)⁷*

Jon (not his real name) was a good kid. He came from a family that seemed to have it together. His older brother demanded most of the family’s attention and Jon, who was a little short, just kind of floated through school. When Jon was in confirmation we saw him occasionally. I assumed it was just because his family lived out in the country and the drive was too much for them on a regular basis. It was also the reason why we figured he did not want to come to youth group. Jon eventually was confirmed and that was that as far as I figured. He would be similar to other kids whose parents brought them to church through confirmation and then who would slowly pull away from the church after that was done. More about Jon in a minute...

Early on in my ministry, I decided to begin sending all the kids in my youth group birthday cards. I started doing this when I was a volunteer Sunday School teacher and adult advisor. The reason came more from my own youth. I am an August birthday, my baby brother was born the day after Christmas, and my dad was born the day before Christmas. It always felt that at Christmas time, my brother’s birthday was honored and remembered. Mine always felt like an after thought. And since school did not start until well after my birthday, no one really marked it the way they did for kids whose birthdays fell during the school year. But, I had one aunt who to this day is unflagging in her remembrance of birthdays. She has faithfully sent me a card and update of their family every year. And it always arrives on my birthday no matter where I have lived! I am not sure how she does it but she does. Her practice reminded me that someone out there took joy in my being here. This was the practice I wanted to emulate in my ministry.

.....

Fast forward a few years to my first call as a full-time youth minister. I’d like to say it was easy, but it was a lot of hard work. No matter what programming problems might have existed, the first thing I did do was get all the names of the kids from the church with their addresses and birthdays. I even added visitors and friends as we went along. This is where Jon’s story comes back in to the picture. You see, even when Jon was done with confirmation, he still got a card from me for his

⁶ A version of this devotion appeared in our first Drenched E-mail newsletter (Summer 2006).

⁷ This version of John 1:26-27 comes from John Henson’s [Good As New: A Radical Retelling of the Scriptures](#).

birthday with a little handwritten note reminding him that someone out there was still thinking about him.

As the congregation went through a pastoral transition, it became clear it was time for me to move on. The problem was we had a large regional gathering to attend that year. Still, God's timing was good. In the midst of planning for our group to attend, a call from another congregation appeared and I accepted. My last event with the youth group would be this regional gathering. It was somewhat of a surprise to see that Jon had decided to come along for this event. I was overjoyed. Maybe now he would feel like he belonged. Maybe the other kids would help bring him into the group even more. Off we went.

On the way home from the event, the kids had a little send off and thank you for me. As we were headed back to our hotel rooms, Jon came over and handed me an envelope.

"Please, promise me you won't read this until you leave," he said.

I was a little suspicious, but I agreed thinking that maybe it was just hard for him to share his feelings and he did not want to be embarrassed.

In the midst of packing and moving I had put Jon's letter in my pile of mail to look at once I arrived in my new place. A few weeks went by before I finally opened it.

As a youthworker, Jon's letter was a reminder of how we never know the impact of our actions. It turned out that earlier that year Jon's brother had gotten into trouble again. The family spent most of the time dealing with that and as Jon's birthday approached he realized that there was not going to be a party for him, or much else for that matter. Jon became very depressed and despondent. He decided that he would help the family on his birthday by planning to kill himself that day. On his birthday, unbelievably low and sad that he had been forgotten, Jon for some reason went to the mailbox. There, in the box, was a letter for him from the church. It was not like a regular envelope and he figured it was a card. So, that day he opened what was my birthday card for him.

Jon revealed this to me in his letter. He mentioned how he would miss having me as his youth leader. But, I will never forget his last sentence: "Thanks for saving my life." God is good and sometimes even in the midst of our own self-concerns and worry about youth group planning, the smallest act of grace can change the world. I was just the instrument. You too are visual reminders of the grace of God. Our work with young people may rarely feel like we are saving anything, but small seeds can grow into overpowering love.

There are plenty of excuses we might use to avoid involvement in ministry with children, youth, and/or young adults. The reality is that all of us know a child, teenager, young adult or family in our congregation. "Dive in" to the lives of the names and faces that come to mind as you think about the young people you come into contact with each week. Try to see yourself as critical people in their faith development because whether you are aware of it or not, you are already involved in some way with people in these age groups.

The *Get Drenched* team wants to be able to dive in to your life as well, in order to support and nurture you in this amazing ministry.

DIVE IN

Focus: In what ways are you called to be involved in ministry with children, youth, and young adults?

Objectives:

1. Learn to see yourself as a critical person in the faith development of children, teenagers and young adults.
2. Discover the joy in serving in this vital ministry.
3. Respond by engaging in this resource, connecting with others, "dive in" and "Get drenched."

Bible Basis: *John 1: 23-27 (NRSV)*

He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."

Materials: The participants from your group.

Defining the Core Value:

The waters of baptism invite us into relationship with God; they offer forgiveness, love, and the welcome of a community of faith. We invite you to 'Dive In' to the waters of baptism and get drenched as together we discover the joy of ministry with children, youth, and young adults.

Small Group Work: Break into groups of 3-4 people. Have groups discuss the following questions. You may wish to give them a few minutes for each one, asking the questions separately and inviting someone to take notes of the responses for their group so that they can be shared with the larger group when you come back together.

- In what ways have you felt as though you are "crying out in the wilderness" in your ministry? What would help you to find your way?
- In what ways do you feel you are helping in the call to "Make straight the way of the Lord?" through your ministry?
- What do you find inspiring about the ministry of John the Baptist?
- How does John's ministry relate to your ministry?
- We are people baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How does your baptism with Christ affect your ministry with children, youth, and young adults?

Activity: Human Knot

Participants stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. Each participant extends their right hand into the center of the circle grasping the right hand of someone across from them. Then, everyone places their left hand into the circle grasping the left hand of a different person across from them. (Do not hold the hand of someone to your immediate left or right.) Once everyone's hands are grasped the participants must form a circle by untangling themselves. They cannot unclasp hands at anytime.

Discussion: Have everyone sit down in the circle that they have just formed and discuss together the following questions.

- What was it like to work through the knot?
- What was it like to untangle yourself? How did you accomplish it? What were the challenges? What was exciting about it?
- What would have happened if no one participated? What would have happened if someone was unwilling to step over or under people?

SAY: Once we “dive in” and work together, even something that seems impossible becomes possible. We have lots of things to navigate in youth ministry, and as we explore these core values for ministry we can use these resources to help to begin “untangling ourselves and one another” while we discover relationships through teamwork and resource sharing.

Developing a Plan: Dive in and Get Drenched using this resource and the many others found on our website: www.getdrenched.org.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)

R

“Refresh”: Ministry with a Little Zest

*"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
(Matthew 11: 28-29)*

I am not sure the commercial is on much anymore but maybe you remember it. Like good marketing campaigns the bottom line was to convince you to purchase the product because without it something was wrong with you. In this case, it was not that you smelled funny, at least not really, but that for some reason you just would not be clean enough without this product. Have you guessed which product I am thinking about? The catchy jingle that accompanied the commercial went, "You're not fully clean until you're Zest-fully clean." That's right, Zest soap. My favorite part of that commercial was that it showed you a filmy "build-up" that was purportedly left behind by "other soaps." Only this soap, Zest, did not leave this on your skin. Now, you may be asking what in the world does this have to do with youth ministry?

It does not take much in a day for us to get a little mucky build-up of our own. We each have demands on us that we place on ourselves, or that come from our vocations, or that are a part of living in a family. We take in tons of information every day that can cloud and muddy our minds with things that normally we never would have been concerned with at all. Our spiritual lives have a tendency to get buried under the every day filmy substances of life.

Sure, we may go to worship weekly, maybe take in a little Bible study group once in a while, or even watch a moment of religious- or faith-based television. But most of us do not take time to just scrape away this layer of world detritus that accumulates around our spiritual skins. We are all in need of a little spiritual zest in our lives.

There have been several times that I have been blessed with some "spiritual resting" moments. They have come with church renewal retreats, or some down time spent at camp. Sometimes little surprises can come in the midst of refreshment as well.

One year, one of my former youth group members was getting married and I was invited to spend the week at her family's home in the midst of a National Park in Oregon. I thought this was a perfect opportunity for a resting place. It would provide me with some gorgeous scenery to appreciate the beauty of creation and I would be pretty much on my own as the family prepared for the wedding. Meals would be easy since I could pop up to eat with them and so that was one less thing to worry about. It could not have been easier or more wonderful.

So, I set off to Oregon and decidedly focused on making this a resting time. Things though did not go as planned. I decided to check my bag with the airline, something I rarely do because it is one more thing to worry about. If I am going to enter into a time of rest, why have the extra burden of

luggage to cart around with me as I make the two other connections through large airports on this trip. One of those connections was in Houston, Texas. As I sat in the terminal waiting to board my plane, I noticed that many of the flights going to Houston were being cancelled. Turns out there was a pretty nasty storm in Houston and so nothing was flying out or in to the airport. My travel plans were flexible for the most part, but the plane I needed to catch in Oregon, one of those little puddle-jumper transports for small local airports, had a pretty narrow window. A bump in my plans on this end meant that I would most certainly miss my connection in Oregon. But there was plenty of time between my next flight, so an hour delay would not matter too much. I offered to change my plans and head out the next day, but as I was speaking to the airline representative, they started to board my flight to Houston.

When we arrived in Houston, my plane to Oregon had already taken off. So now I was in Houston, no luggage save for my backpack full of books for my retreat. I frantically looked for someone to help me and found that the line was so long it would take a few hours before I could do anything. First though, I had to phone the family in Oregon because it was an hour drive to the airport and they would not need to go. A call to their home reached their grandmother. She was a sweet lady but she had a little trouble trying to figure out who was calling and what I was trying to say (I'm sure I was perfectly coherent, of course). I just told her to leave a message to not go to the airport today. I headed back into the morass of airline customer service lines. My patience was gone, I was all alone and my plans for a perfect week of renewal were gone.

It was then that I realized that I had packed my little phone and address book in my backpack. In it was the phone number of a long time friend of mine who lived in Houston. Problem solved! I called to see if I could stay with her family and about an hour later I was on my way to an unexpected visit.

The next morning her husband returned from work, having just been laid off from his job. It was one of those devastating moments in their family and my presence there somehow allowed him to talk about some hope for the future. It was the kind of conversation you normally do not have with friends, at least not often.

I was soon back at the airport. New plans made and ready to finally begin my renewal retreat. Honoring my contract that I had made for the week I took out a little book by Henri Nouwen and began reading. I had not read much when I just laughed out loud. The devotional story I picked to read that morning dealt with Balaam. Remember him? He was the prophet in Numbers 22 that was told not to do something but tried to do it anyway—one of the stubborn prophets. If you recall, while Balaam was traveling down the road his ass suddenly wandered off into the field. Balaam was furious that his pack animal was not staying on the path and kept beating it to get back on the road. Turns out the ass was a bit smarter than Balaam because it saw an angel of the Lord on the path and it turned out into the field to save Balaam's life.

There I was sitting....in the airport having been turned out into the "fields of Houston" much against my wishes. But God needed me there as a sign of grace for my friends. And the story was a reminder to me that my own singleness of purpose, my own stubbornness, sometimes is not the path God wants me on. Ironically, when I finally arrived in Oregon, my luggage, which I figured I would never see again, was sitting there waiting for me to pick it up, and the rest of the week was fine.

We all need a little kick in the...pants sometimes to keep our spiritual focus. We all need some time to renew our spirits and refresh ourselves so that we can be ready to take on God's plans for us and for the ministry we share together. As leaders around the synod candidly talked about what they need for youth and family ministry, one recurring theme was the need for spiritual nurture. Leaders need to be spiritually refreshed and renewed on a regular basis so that we have a spiritual life to share with kids, young adults, and families. Faithful relationships with each other begin with a faith-filled relationship with God. The team's goal is to help you discover the resources you need to be refreshed to open you to the amazing work of God through your gifts and ministry and to make you "zestfully clean."⁸

⁸ An aspect of this value is the establishment of a spiritual renewal retreat for leaders that is anticipated to be an annual event (with the hope that it can be offered twice a year in different parts of the synod). Including devotions with the email newsletter and on the Drenched blog site, and renewal resources on the team's website, is also intended to provide resources for leaders.

REFRESH

Focus: We are called to be refreshed and made new each day in our baptism. How are you called to refresh your ministry area?

Objectives:

1. Learning to change can be hard and exciting at the same time.
2. Discover being refreshed can bring new life to our ministry.
3. Respond refreshed by our baptismal call.

Bible Basis: *Matthew 11: 28-30*

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Materials: Bible; big bag of random things for each table. This may include different art supplies (tape, glue, pipe cleaners, paper, cloth) and lots of random objects – be creative and wild with them.

Defining the Core Value:

God comes to us in the waters of our baptism, washing us, and making us new to begin again. Luther reminds us to "remember our baptism daily". Renewing our spirit, feeding our own need for spiritual growth, can open us to new possibilities and help us to see another way. Turning to God we can "start new" again.

Small Group Work: Break into small groups of 3-4 people. Have groups discuss the following questions. You may wish to give them a few minutes for each one, asking the questions separately and inviting someone to take notes of the responses for their group so that they can be shared with the larger group when you come back together.

1. In what ways are you refreshed? (Where do you go to take a moment from the pressures of daily living?)
2. What makes you excited? Brings you passion? What gives you passion?
3. In baptism we are made "new". What kinds of possibilities does this statement open for you, or make you think about?

Activity

Break the larger group into diverse small groups at different tables. Give them their bag and tell them they have to come up with a Baptism-themed float for a parade (not to scale though). After 20 minutes, or until it looks like they are about halfway finished (a shape is forming but it is still unclear what it is), have them switch tables. Make sure there is no discussion from the other group, but instruct them that they have to take what is on the table and carry it through to completion. After it looks like groups are finished call them back together to present their float and theme.

Discussion: After everyone has had a chance to present their float, have the group answer the following questions.

1. What was it like to create your piece?
2. What happened when you switched? What did you think about your new float?
3. What were the challenges?
4. What was good about having a different float to complete? What would have made it easier?

SAY: It is both exciting and difficult to be refreshed, to “start anew.” Sometimes we want to do it “our way” and holding on to what we planned or what we’ve always done can hinder our creativity. Allowing the spirit to work within us, trying something new, and being open to different possibilities can lead to more than we may have imagined. Everyone brings their gifts for God to use; inviting them to be shared opens endless possibilities. In what ways can we remember our baptism daily and be refreshed in being made new?

Developing a Plan: Think about ways to “remember your baptism” that can help you be made new in youth ministry. Check out the Drenched ministry team blog: <http://getdrenched.wordpress.com>. Use the blog to share with others some of the ways you are involving youth in ministry and to see what others are doing. Check out when the next Spiritual Renewal Retreat is taking place, or see if a retreat house is available nearby for you and your youth to use. Better yet, offer a renewal opportunity for adult leaders in your congregation or a neighboring congregation.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)

E

“Equip”: You Want Me to Do What?

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—
and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”
(1 Corinthians 12: 12-13)*

“You want me to do what?” That was my question one afternoon when the parish assistant at my church called to ask me to volunteer for something. She had the unenviable job of connecting people’s gifts with ministry in the congregation. “We need a Sunday School teacher for the High School and your name came up.” Does that sound familiar? I have often wondered who are these people that suggest names to church committees. And how do they discern who goes where? “The youth suggested that you might be interested.” What youth? I did not remember talking to any youth saying, “Hey, if you ever need a Sunday School teacher, be sure to mention my name.”

The invitation to teach Sunday School led to an amazing lifelong faith journey with its share of ups and downs, but the thread that remains constant is this understanding that we are all connected in some significant way. I was reminded of this at a national youth gathering several years ago when I bumped in to one of those “high school youth” from this congregation. Now in his late 20s, he had brought his church youth group to the gathering. Wow, that was an overwhelming moment to think that he is carrying on a ministry that is connected to one that we were both a part of ten years before. We may be miles apart, but we are reminded of our connectedness through our relationship with Christ.

Often we are invited to participate in ministry for the simple reason that someone has seen something in us that makes them think we would enjoy serving and growing in our discipleship in a particular way. Too often though we invite others into ministry and then abandon them in their small boat to weather whatever storms come our way. For most of us we rarely get to see the shore in our ministry, whether it is as a volunteer, or a staff member, and sometimes we have forgotten to look for Jesus when the storm pops up around us.

Jesus is our anchor and so it is that as we come together to discern God’s call on our own lives, we can turn to him knowing that we are connected to a great body of people that have come before. We are all one body and we need to keep this in mind at all times. This is vitally important in our congregations. It is important to think about ways we can re-unite the different parts of our church body to equip one another for ministry and continue to build up the kingdom of God.

We take hope from the fact that practically every leader, from Moses to Paul, has asked that same question, “You want me to do what?” But with each passing year, there are a myriad of resources available for us to choose from.

I did decide to teach that Sunday School class. We did not have a chosen curriculum. So I thought we would just start with the Bible, and we launched into a discussion of Genesis together that lasted the whole Spring. I tried to figure out how to do things “better” and worried that I was not doing “the right thing.” Being equipped to do ministry means that there are resources to bring you a wealth of information.

Navigating the incredible amount of ministry tools available for children, youth, young adult, and family ministry can be overwhelming. The Get Drenched website (www.getdrenched.org) is a great portal that can launch you into a world of resources all around you. Workshops and training opportunities pop up around the synod all the time and there are leadership training opportunities for adults and youth interested in learning more about ministry. We just need to remind ourselves that it takes everyone in the body participating and building up the people around them for the sake of Jesus. It opens the doors to more opportunities and who knows, ten years from now you might just bump into one of those youth whose life was changed through your youth ministry.

EQUIP

Focus: How does God equip us for ministry in the world?

Objectives:

1. Learn what it means to be marked by the cross in baptism.
2. Discover the power what it means to be lifted by the spirit.
3. Respond by exploring and engaging in the many resources available on the website:
www.getdrenched.org.

Bible Basis: *1 Corinthians 12: 12-13*

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Baptismal Rite: ELW (p.231)

Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

We welcome you into the body of Christ and the mission we share. Join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.

Baptismal Rite: LBW (p. 124-125)

Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and workers with us in the kingdom of God.

Materials: Bible, LBW/ELW, Squares of toilet paper

Defining the Core Value:

We are given many resources to help us in the work of youth ministry. We begin with God and the mark of our baptism. Marked with the cross of Christ we are given the resources of God's family and marked as children of God. We are lifted by the spirit in all that we do. Remembering that we are not alone in our ministry, through our unity in Christ, we turn to the Spirit to lift us and to resources from others engaged in youth ministry.

Small Group Work: Break into small groups of 3-4 people. Have groups discuss the following questions. You may wish to give them a few minutes for each one, asking the questions separately and inviting someone to take notes of the responses for their group so that they can be shared with the larger group when you come back together. Have each group read the baptismal rite from the LBW/ELW. Write the following questions up on a board or piece of newsprint for the groups to discuss.

1. What does it mean to you to be “sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked by the cross of Christ forever”?
2. How does it draw together or offer you support?
3. What about being “marked by the cross” is challenging?

Have smaller groups share their answers with the larger group.

Activity:

Each person is given one square of toilet paper. On your command to “Go”, each person will toss the square in the air and should try to keep their square in the air by blowing it upwards. No hands allowed. The goal is to see who can keep the tissue in the air the longest.

Discussion: As a group, talk about what it means to be lifted by the spirit, consider discussing the following questions:

1. How is the Spirit present in your ministry? How is it lifting you?
2. How does your congregation lift up your youth ministry? How does the synod? How does the wider church?⁹

Developing a Plan:

Share with each other some known resources from your work with youth. Explore the Drenched website for other resources at www.getdrenched.org, and get the latest updates, share resources, and discuss ministry at the Get Drenched Blog page, <http://getdrenched.wordpress.com>. (You may also wish to have copies of the bibliography from this resource available to hand out.)

⁹ If you are unsure about these questions, consider having a computer available that can access the ELCA’s website and use the quick find drop-down box to explore the pages on youth ministry, young adult ministry, campus ministry, and Christian education as a start: www.elca.org. You may also wish to check out the ELCA Youthworker’s Network pages at www.elcaymnet.org.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)



“Network”: Connecting to the Source¹⁰

“Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

John 17:24

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Matthew 18:20

Though I may seem like a techno-junkie to your average Lutheran, I am anything but, though I do enjoy the learning curve that goes along with discovering new ways of doing ministry. There are times when the technology we have at our disposal seems to be developed in paradoxical ways. For instance, we have big screen TVs so that we can watch epic films in movie theater aspects (i.e. “widescreen”) but then we can also download the same film to our cell phone. We buy surround stereo systems to listen to music, but also have Ipods that feature compressed sound. It sometimes makes one shake their heads in wonder. Some of you may have just figured out e-mail only to discover that you should be “blogging.” Or maybe you have just skipped blogging and headed straight toward the social networking tools like My Space or Facebook. (A few years ago, I used to run AOL and MSN’s “instant messenger” services on my computer which was a great tool for youth to connect with our youth ministry staff anytime.)

In April 2007, I headed to the Project Connect annual meeting (see www.projectconnect.org) and had a first hand chance to really think about how we can better connect to one another. It is perhaps the work of the Holy Spirit that a recent Calumet Spring Fling theme was “My Space” as well. During one of our small group sessions at the Project Connect meeting, I met Sarah (not her real name). Sarah is in transition into college life and a frequent My Space user. She shared how this online community creates opportunities to connect with others who think like her, have similar interests, and whom she has met in a number of places, including church events.

For me, and perhaps you, online communities like My Space are a bit daunting, frightening, and highly suspicious. That is an appropriate response if you are a Gen X-er (person born between 1965-1976). We barely caught the wave of internet use even though many in our generation helped create and explore, and even exploit it. Many of us were the guinea pigs for dating services that promised to use technology to connect us to soulmates. But the new generation of Millennial youth (people born between 1977-1998) are here to remind us of a more global and far-reaching use of technology.

For Sarah, and thousands of young people, online sites like My Space allow them to find others like themselves. It can be an oasis in the midst of the raging storm of adolescence. Older youth

¹⁰ A version of this devotion first appeared in the Summer 2007 *Get Drenched E-mail Newsletter*.

and young adults turn to Facebook to stay connected to their high school friends and college classmates while also connecting and networking to a variety of causes, groups, and individuals.

We are hungry to be connected. We all want to belong and find a way to be reminded that our passions for life are shared by others. It is one of the strange paradoxes of our time that we want to be individuals with our own style, but desperately need to know there are others like us out there. It might seem disingenuous that this can happen online, but stranger things have happened. An e-mail takes too long to share an observation, thought, or frustration. Now, I can sign on to my Facebook page, or Blog, and jot down this thought for the whole world to see. Wow!

What does this have to do with the church? As Jesus prays in John 17 we see him modeling the ultimate connection. Through prayer, Jesus goes to the source, reminds himself that God, his Father, is there with him, has always been there, and will always be there. But more importantly, his prayer is an invitation that God allow others to see this divine love that is about to flow radically into the world on the cross. It is an invitation that draws his friends closer together to share their radical new life with the world and which will soon cause them to be change agents.

One thing that is missing in our computer connection is a real, flesh and blood relationship. If we are led to feel like a relationship between another can only happen in one way, we will miss out on something important. You can support someone through the internet, and you can share that you care about someone through the internet. Let's face it though, the internet is for information. It is there to connect us indeed. But even as we use this as a tool we must invite ourselves to take a second step that involves a more human connection. One that reminds those we connect with that God's love is in the world, not on the worldwide web. Our ministry space needs to be a place where we connect to God through prayer—a space that can then serve as our source of God's love visible to everyone.

When a tool like My Space or Facebook is used to bring people together in groups to share their lives, it serves a greater purpose. When our worship brings us together to connect to and through one another, it changes lives. When our ministries connect people to THE source, it can change the world.

Likewise, why go crazy trying to re-create the wheel when someone's already done it? Why go crazy trying to invent a new Junior High or VBS program when someone's already done it? An ongoing process of collecting information concerning the who, what, when, and where and why of great youth, young adult, and family ministries already happening in New England allows the Get Drenched team and your congregation to connect people with others. It is a crucial part of being in ministry together as questions arise and possibilities for ministry appear throughout our synod.

NETWORK

Focus: Where a community connects, gifts are in abundance.

Objectives:

1. Learn networking is a gift given through the Body of Christ.
2. Discover that when we gather our gifts together, new possibilities arise.
3. Respond by forming new connections.

Bible Basis: *Matthew 18: 15-20*

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Materials: Several children's puzzles, Yarn

Defining the Core Value:

Jesus tells us, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Gathering together as community brings us into God's presence and opens us to new possibilities. Maintaining those connections keeps us alive in the spirit and brings leaders together in ministry. We are all in ministry together not in competition against one another.

Small Group Work: Start by sharing that sometimes ministry with youth is challenging because we feel alone in our work, the obstacles feel like mountains to be climbed. Have each person write down things that keep them from feeling connected to others. Then have people think about what helps them feel connected and list those as well. Have people get in pairs to share what they wrote down. Have each person keep their partner's list and mutually agree to pray for them and their challenges and celebrations as you continue. For, "Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)

Activity (Note there are 2 possible activities to choose from)

Get several children's puzzles but switch a few of the pieces to another puzzle. Divide the group up and have them start building their puzzle. When they realize they have some wrong pieces hopefully they will go to another table and trade pieces. If they seem stuck encourage this to happen.

Or

Have everyone stand in a circle. If people don't know each other, introduce everyone. Then take yarn and throw it to each other. When you receive the yarn you hold onto it, name a strength you bring to ministry with youth and then throw it to someone else who doesn't have any yarn. Soon a web will form. Have one person pull tight on their string and see how it affects everyone else. Have some let go. Talk about our need to network to be stronger and more exciting.

Discussion: If you did the yarn activity, have people just sit down in a circle where they are. Discuss the following questions together as a large group:

1. What was it like to name the strength's you bring to ministry?
2. What was it like to hear what others brought?
3. What strengths did you hear that might be helpful to your own ministry?
4. (For Second Activity) What happened when we pulled on the string in different places?
5. How would it affect our network that's gathered here if that one person wasn't here? How are we stronger because of it?
6. In what ways will you work together to keep this network going and to find others?

We need to talk about the need to share our gifts in different ways to create a network of people and gifts.¹¹

Developing a Plan:

Exchange e-mails with members of your group. Make sure everyone has book-marked the Get Drenched web page and blog page. You might consider having someone put together a list of related websites that can be resources for your team. Signup to receive e-mail updates of new blog entries (you can subscribe at the Get Drenched blog) and also e-mail the Get Drenched team at getdrenched@gmail.com to request that you be added to the e-mail news list (Be sure that you include your name, congregation and its location, in your request.) Check out the ELCA's Youth Ministry Network at www.elcaymnet.org for other resources and news about the annual ELCA Youthworker's Extravaganza held annually in February.

¹¹ You may wish to take time to do a Spiritual Gifts inventory at this time. There are many Spiritual Gift "tests" available and several can be linked to through the resources section at the Get Drenched website: www.getdrenched.org. The ELCA also has on-line versions which people could take prior to this session and bring their results to this meeting time.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)



“Celebrate”: See the Marvelous Work!

*“O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.”
(Psalm 96: 1-3)*

Ever had a case of the “if onlys”? Perhaps you have butted into one of the people suffering from the “if onlys.” A person who has “if only” disease tends to say things like this: If only...I had more money; I had a new computer; I could drive; I could lose some weight; I hadn’t eaten that whole pizza; I went to church more often...You get the idea? It turns out though that not just people can suffer from “if onlys.” Sometimes, a group, or (and this will be hard to believe) a church, can suffer from “if onlys.”

Now when a church suffers from “if onlys” it sounds something like this: If only...we had a new building; we had a bigger youth group; we had more volunteers; we could keep new members; we had a new pastor; we moved to a new location; the synod would help; others gave more...Those are the nicer church “if onlys.” I have heard other ones and when we begin to slide down the steep slope leading to “if only” ministry we are headed for trouble. Hopefully, as you have worked through the resources outlined here, the “if onlys” have disappeared. If they have not, you might consider doing a little “asset mapping.”¹²

Another way perhaps of looking at this malaise is by knowing who the people are that “see the cup half empty” and those that “see the cup half full.” If I am honest, there are times that I think someone has taken my cup! But I love the way Psalm 96 opens, “Sing to the Lord a new song!” What a wonderful invitation for us to consider. For so many of us, it may seem like we are singing the same old song. The song seems to get longer and longer, developing a laundry list of complaints to outmatch Job’s. Now there is a guy who needed a new song!

Do you remember Job’s story? It starts out with everything going fine. You know, the kind of story that you would tell about yourself, perhaps. “I was just sitting at home, minding my own business when....” Well, that is what happens to Job. He goes from an established husband and father with an abundance of food and livestock to nothing. All this in less than eight verses! And Job responds like the appropriate God-fearing man that he is, accepting his fate...until the next day. Then he gets a case of the worst skin disease you have ever seen. He is so pathetic that his wife

12 Asset mapping has been used in social organizations to help them discover, or re-discover, the many things that they have to do the work they are called to do. It was developed for use in congregations by Luther Snow in his book, Luther Snow, [The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on its Gifts](#). The New England Synod has trained people who can lead an asset mapping session for your congregation. Contact a member of the Get Drenched team for details.

wishes he would just curse God and die. Friends show up to console him by just hanging out with him for a whole week saying nothing. After all what is there to say to a man that has essentially lost everything?

Job's story gets more interesting as he begins to talk out loud about his need to raise his complaints before God. And there is a pretty interesting twist to this story that soon has Job singing a new song. Job's story so often connects with our own that it is no wonder that it is an oft-read book of the Bible.

The whole point of sharing a bit of Job's story to jog your memory is to have you think for a moment of the great stories that might be happening all around you. Too often we live in our own congregational bubble in seeming competition, often self-imposed, with other congregations around us. We forget that we are all in the ministry of building God's kingdom and instead wish we had something else. The more we stay focused on what we do not have, the more we tend to believe that this problem extends beyond our own congregations and into others as well. When we begin to research this "misery must love company" approach to building ministry partnerships, is it any wonder that God's story and hope for us gets lost?

As I pointed out in the thoughts about connecting to people, we must be connected to one another. There is so much at stake in our knowing about one another. Is it any wonder then that there seems to be a combined force trying to rip us into segments and force us to "curse God and die?" If you have gotten this far in our resource and still feel a bit frustrated, just know that somewhere out there in Lutheran-land, or Christian ministry, sits a person just like yourself doubting whether any of this will work. But seriously, look how many Christians there are in the world, and consider that the extent of their Christian discipleship was built on maybe 1-2 hours of worship a month and maybe 2-3 hours of Sunday School as an elementary youth! If God's message has not been drowned out yet, and we are working to equip and nurture one another, there is truly nothing we cannot do as individuals, as congregations, as synod, as church, as the body of Christ.

There is no need to re-create something from scratch. There are already great ministries happening in our synod. There are synods that have had the same concerns about youth and family ministry too. When we are aware of their ministry, connect to the wider church, and gain a little perspective, it helps us know where best to focus our energy. All over New England there are amazing adults who have come alongside of a youth or young adult in their congregation and cultivated a relationship with that young person through which they've become a key part of their faith development. That's worth celebrating!!

Our New England Synod has wonderful Campus Ministries (have you considered partnering with the one closest to your congregation?), a great outdoor ministry in Camp Calumet (www.calumet.org), a wonderful retreat setting in Vermont's Koinonia (www.koinoniaofvermont.org), an annual gathering at Hammonasset, and the continued leadership development sponsored through Project Connect (www.projectconnect.org). The Get Drenched ministry team continues to find ways to lift up wonderful ministry through regular workshops, retreats, and resources available on-line. There are youth throughout the synod who are striving to create opportunities for service at the synod level as well.

Giving thanks to these ministries and finding ways to increase the awareness of their presence in the region is accomplished through regular emails and website updates as well as through interaction on our blogsite: <http://getdrenched.wordpress.com/>. We need to celebrate continuously the wonderful work already being done in Christ's name all over New England and in the ELCA and its ministry partners. This is the new song we sing to celebrate the joy we have as Northeastern Christians.

CELEBRATE

Focus: Reasons for celebration abound in youth ministry, where will you find reason to celebrate?

Objectives:

1. Learn there is more to celebrate in youth ministry than we see at first glance.
2. Discover how God invites us to lift them up together in ministry.
3. Respond by sharing those celebrations with our community.

Bible Basis: *Psalm 96*

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.
Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.
Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Say among the nations, "The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth.

Materials: newsprint/blackboard; marker; A bag of M&Ms.

Defining the Core Value:

It is important to take time and give thanks to the many ministries within our synod and throughout the ELCA that work to create tools for your ministry. Finding ways to increase the awareness of their presence in the region within and between our congregations is accomplished through regular emails and website updates as well as through interaction on our blogsite: <http://getdrenched.wordpress.com/>. We need to celebrate continuously the wonderful work already being done in Christ's name all over New England and in the ELCA and its ministry partners.

Small Group Work: This is a good time to do a little check-in with your group. Read together Psalm 96 and have people share a key word or phrase that jumped out to them as you read the scripture passage. Read the passage a couple of times and see if there are ideas that people might have for your own ministry. Be sure to write these on newsprint or a board that everyone can see

Activity:

Have everyone sit in a circle. Take the bag (or bowl) of M&Ms and invite each person to take a handful, but not to eat them just yet. For each M&M they must share a celebration about being engaged in youth ministry. Encourage celebrations that are specific to your congregation.

Discussion: As everyone enjoys their M&Ms, take time to share their thoughts around the following questions:

1. We often focus on the challenges of youth ministry, how was it different to name the celebrations?
2. What is easy to celebrate, why or why not?
3. What can we celebrate more often?
4. What were you surprised to hear others celebrating?
5. Do we always celebrate the same things?
6. Why is it sometimes good to celebrate different aspects of our ministry? Why is it good to celebrate differently from others?
7. Have you discovered a new place of passion to develop and how would you lift that up in your particular place of ministry?

Developing a Plan:

Encourage members of the group to find ways to lift up the celebrations you have discovered in other ministries of the congregations. Host a time of celebration for the work of youth and youth leaders. Consider hosting an Asset Mapping session for your congregation. Create a time of fellowship where your congregation can share the little things (not just trips to the national gathering) that are cause for celebration. Encourage your group to watch for ways that great ministry is happening in the congregation (great Sunday morning conversations, greeting for worship, reading the lessons well, hospitality, etc.) Celebrate and discover ways to share your new song with the congregation and others.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)

H

“Hope”: What’s Left?

*“There is one body and one Spirit
-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called –
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
(Ephesians 4: 4-6)*

There was a time when hope seemed to spring eternal. Now there is a sentence of someone who is no longer a “young adult.” Every generation I think comes to a time where it looks backwards and thinks of things they once had, opportunities missed, and a life that did not turn out quite like they thought it would. For most of the young people in our ministries, “hope” has often been replaced by “fear” in their vocabulary and world.

The 1990s kicked off with endless enthusiasm, but something was not right. And for almost a decade, our culture has been turned a bit upside down. The defining moment for many in the “post-millennial” generation (those born from 1999-present) will no doubt be 9/11.¹³ For many in the previous generation (especially those at the end of the “millennial” generation) there has been an endless supply of fear mongering in the culture. Concurrent with this rhetorical and politicized language, a culture of ultra-personalization has arisen that further serves to isolate us from one another. I do not intend us to get angry about new technology, for what is an Ipod but a supercharged and miniaturized Walkman after all? But into the breach of our current fear-driven culture has arisen a more insidious cultural thread: the thread of celebrity.

It is bad enough that many of us know more about the latest movies and can recite the many stories we have seen from our latest TV shows more than we can remember a particular Gospel or Bible story. We are better at *Movie Scene-It* DVD games than we are at answering questions about how many gospels there are, what are the first five books of the Bible called, etc. You might think that a little silly at first, but if you are not sure about this, try playing the Disney *Scene-It* game with a group of children and you will be both amazed and frightened by how much detail they know about Disney movies, television shows, and cartoons.

More recently, there is a trend in young adults who feel like failures because they have turned 21 and have not become a rock star, a movie star, or a pop idol. This is a little cultural wake-up call to those of us who work with young people and can provide them with a little different perspective to the world that is not driven by media saturation and disconnecting from one another. Yet ask most

¹³ Authors Neil Howe and William Strauss have several books that explore generational characteristics. The categories for the different generations are often fluid, and the use of the term “post-millennial” is the current language used to discuss this age group. It picks up where Howe and Strauss stopped in their book, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000).

young adults if they feel connected to others and they will say, "Yes." Welcome to the one of the paradoxes of the 21st Century.

In our ministry, we have an opportunity to shine light on the way our young people are fed by the culture around them. We have a chance to understand it, and then use it to the glory of God. We do not need to be consumed by fear because we have a God who drives out fear. We do not need to be saddened by feelings of inadequacy because we have a God who loves us and gives us everything we truly need. This is what ultimately brings us hope to a hope-starved world. The good news is that God is here and we are God's people in the world.

All of us on the Get Drenched team firmly believe that God is leading and guiding our work and yours. As we get to know the people involved in this ministry all over our synod, we are filled with great hope for the future! As we see high school youth organizing for gatherings in mission areas throughout our synod we get excited. As we see congregations sharing resources to reach more youth we cheer them on when the challenges seem insurmountable.

When we discover a resource that helps us understand the culture, we share it with you through our blog and in conversations with one another. We have hope because we have seen the possibilities and amazing abundance of ministry opportunities that exist here in New England. We have been drenched with these discoveries like an ever-flowing baptismal stream that washes away the dirtiness of fear; that cleanses us from the noisy unrealistic expectations of the world; that pulls us along to the source of our ministry, Jesus.

I love this Ephesians passage because it is a reminder that we are all one large body of Christians. We are here to bring unity in the world not to find ways to rip it apart. We are called to be patient when things go in unexpected directions and we are reminded that we are here for but a moment whereas God will still be here when we are long gone. That goes for how we become involved in ministries as well.

There is plenty of room for hope in our synod. We have so many wonderful leaders who are gifts to our ministry, and gifted to raise up other leaders in our synod. There are many volunteers who spend countless hours passing on the faith. And there are youth who continually grow into young adults of deep faith that is changing the world even as we speak.

I started by suggesting that we are no longer in a time of hope. But I think if we look closely we can discover God's guiding hand in everything we do and if we just take time to listen to one another, and more importantly to the Holy Spirit, we might just discover that hope is one of God's gracious signs that we are never alone.

HOPE

Focus: Optimism and hope go hand in hand. How do we stay positive and confident in God's guiding hand? How do we confidently lean on God and the Holy Spirit to lead us where we need to be?

Objectives:

1. Learn there is cause for hope and optimism for our youth and families as we all begin to understand that ministry is about building relationships.
2. Discover a sense of optimism about our ministry, by leaning on God for help our ministry will grow.
3. Respond by finding a passage, song or something that can easily and instinctively remind you of God's hope and omnipresence.

Bible Basis: *Ephesians 4: 1-6*

"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (NIV)

Materials: Bible, markers, newsprint

Defining the Core Value:

We find our hope in God and share that hope in love for one another. Sharing together our "unity in the Spirit" calls us forward when the way seems challenging or difficult. We give one another the gift of hope when we share our stories of faith with open hearts and ready spirits.

Small Group Work: What is hope? As a noun it suggests "optimism" as a verb its essence means "to expect." Hope is a positive word filled with possibilities. We want to begin by looking at Ephesians 4:1-5. Ask one person to read the passage as others follow along and pause then have a second person read the passage and ask participants to close their eyes and really listen with their ears and their heart. Break the group down into groups of 4 or 5 and have them discuss what stood out for them about this passage? What does hope mean here? Share insights with entire group.

Activity:

In small groups, hand out newsprint and ask them to share what hope means to them. Not individual stories but what does it mean to them personally. (You may wish to have some pictures of symbols of hope to hand out after a few moments and have the group reflect on them.) Have them try to define it for themselves. Call the group back together and have people share their insights.

Discussion: Ask each participant to think of a time when they had lost hope, how did they rediscover hope, have them share a little about that.

1. How do you keep hope alive? Have the groups reflect on this and share with the larger group after some time for reflection.

You may wish to end with a meaningful story about hope either one from a book or one from your own life.

Developing a Plan:

Hope is very powerful and often time brings new life to people in ways they never saw coming. Create a list of ways to find hope from the discussion. Share these with your congregational community; invite youth to share their stories of hope as part of worship.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)

E

“Empower”: Hand it Over

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;
and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God
who activates all of them in everyone.”
(1 Corinthians 12: 4-6)*

Perhaps the hardest thing you will ever do as a youth leader is to let a youth lead. Read that sentence again and think on it a bit. You might be wondering why you just spend several hours of your life working together on core values for ministry and now you do not get to do the ministry? Well, that is not exactly what I mean. But I do want to take a moment here to caution those of you who are living, or re-living, being a teenager by being a youth group leader. There is a level of maturity that comes with being an adult, at least that is what we all hope, and the one thing we bring to the table for youth is some long-term perspective. That perspective allows us to cheerlead when things go bad and when things go well and it makes for a ministry that can replicate itself as youth move on to college and become involved in ministry elsewhere as adults.

I never ask people to do something I have not done first, but I can tell you that the road to handing over youth group nights to youth is a long and exciting journey. It starts by believing young people can lead and giving them the opportunity to do it. You need to determine what skills they need, what gifts they have, and how these two things can come together for ministry. It might sound like a difficult thing, but truly it happens quite naturally if we are able to be in permission giving congregations where it is always easy to ask for forgiveness.

We mentioned earlier the importance of discovering people's spiritual gifts. At the end of a confirmand's lifespan (i.e., confirmation time) it was my job to help them write their faith statements. I gave each confirmand a spiritual gifts assessment and we discovered together what this had to say about who they were and what gifts that they had to share. Spiritual gifts inventories cannot tell you if you can play an instrument or do feats of gymnastic dexterity so knowing if a person has some of these other gifts is also vital for this process.

Matt was a very excited 7th grader. He wanted to be involved on our youth team but we had decided that the best leaders tended to just be high school students. That meant that Matt did not get a chance to do much leading. He wanted to help though and so we put him to work. We told Matt (note the verb there) that he would be the greeter for Youth Group Night. It would be Matt's job to stand at the double doors to the gym and greet people and invite them in to the room, or direct them to where we were meeting. It seemed to us that this was a pretty simple job. Youth Group Night came along and Matt showed up in time to take his post at the door. The other youth who had planned the evening worked with our adult leaders to set-up the room and get

ready. People began to show up soon, but when I turned to look, Matt was in the midst of the crowd playing the game. He had left his post as greeter. "Matt, get over to the door and greet people," I yelled in my non-Christian voice. Matt would sulk over to the door and wait with that look that was best used for funeral parlor attendants. This went on for some time and fortunately, Matt stuck with our Youth Group into 8th grade, helping less, but still participating.

Finally, it came time for Matt to be confirmed and we sat down to look at the results of his Spiritual Gifts inventory. It came as no surprise that out of all the spiritual gifts possible, Matt scored the lowest on "Hospitality." We laughed at that together and then began to talk about the gifts that Matt had showed a greater strength in so that he could participate in ways that affirmed who God had created him to be. Wow, what a great way to empower a young person!

Empowering youth to lead will be a scary time for the congregation. Things go wrong, but they go just as wrong when adults do things. The first youth group that was entirely youth-led in my own ministry frightened the heck out of me, until it started. I came that night to youth group not knowing what games we were going to play, whether we had a Bible Study time planned, or even who was planning the night. But things went pretty well, in fact, it was the best youth group that church had had up to that point! It is a reminder that youth can do more than light candles and do yard work. These are both great opportunities for service, but not every youth is good at it, or wants to do it. When we empower people for ministry, we see God moving through the congregation in exciting ways that will impact ministry far beyond ourselves and what we can do.

Here in New England, we not only have amazing leaders in this synod, we have amazing youth and young adults! They are filled with gifts for ministry. We hope that you'll get to know them, help them discern what their gifts are, and find a place for them to use their gifts within your congregations. You will be glad you did.

EMPOWER

Focus: What gifts do the youth of your congregation have for ministry in the church and the world?

Objectives:

1. Learn what kinds of gifts and talents might be given by God.
2. Discover how the gifts given by God bind us together in ministry.
3. Respond by sharing those gifts to the Glory of God.

Bible Basis: *1 Corinthians 12: 4-11*

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses." (NRSV)

Materials: Bible, Pens and Post-its™

Defining the Core Value:

Everyone has God-given gifts. We are each unique and talented. In order for youth leaders and adults to help empower young people for ministry, we need to help them identify the gifts within them. Lift up the variety and diversity of gifts and remind them they are God given and shared as gifts of the Spirit.

Small Group Work: How do we remember this: We are marked with the cross of Christ in our baptism. This mark and the many gifts we have shared help us to remember we are called to service, gifted with talents, and lifted by the spirit no matter what our age or abilities. Break into small groups and have the groups discuss the following questions:

1. What do you think of when you hear the list of gifts given by the Spirit in the passage in 1 Corinthians?
2. What gifts sound like one you might share with others?
3. What gifts of the Spirit are not listed in this piece of scripture?

Bring the group back together to share their conversations. You may wish to re-visit the spiritual gifts discussion you had in a previous core value discussion, or take the time to lift up Spiritual Gifts resources to the group.

Activity:

Give everyone five Post-its™ notes asking them to write one gift or thing they like to do per post-it. The first person goes to the wall and places their Post-its™ notes in a line while sharing with the group their gifts and why they enjoy them. The second person picks one thing they have in common and then builds down or up or sideways from the other person's list. They share their gifts. Continue until everyone has added their post it notes (it will look like a large crossword puzzle).

Discussion: Before beginning the discussion, take a moment to give thanks for the many gifts that people have in your group! Then allow time for everyone to look at the final crossword of gifts and ask the following questions:

1. How are our gifts similar? How are our gifts different?
2. What do you think about when you see how these gifts are connected?
3. If gifts weren't shared what would happen to our community?
4. Does age make a difference in the sharing of gifts?
5. Is anyone scared of using your gifts? Excited? WHY?

The gifts the group has shared help us to remember we are called to service, gifted with talents, and lifted by the spirit no matter what our age or abilities.

Develop a Plan:

Picking one gift shared discuss a particular way that gift can be shared in a way that is meaningful to your understanding of God's call to discipleship. Draw up a covenant with one another and follow through on holding each other (the youth) accountable for using your gifts in the congregation and for service in the world.

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)

D

“Disciple”: You Are Not Alone

*“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28: 20)*

The worst kind of youth ministry, or truly any ministry, is the one that thinks it can go it alone. The Lone Ranger still had Tonto to follow him on his adventures and Jesus took at least 12 disciples with him throughout most of his ministry. So why is it that we all think we can do things by ourselves? Doing the job alone is beguilingly simple and easy until you try and get other people to buy into the work you are doing. It is no coincidence that many of the passages chosen in this resource have emphasized connectedness to others. We need other disciples around us to do healthy ministry.

I am always reminded of that scene in scripture where Jesus sends out 70 people with a specific ministry plan. We have no idea where they actually went, but the interesting thing in the story is that they come back surprised that what they were told to do actually worked! Now why were they so surprised? The story is a reflection as well that though there were two of them, Jesus was still along for the ride. And Jesus is along for the ride of ministry that you and your congregation are on, to believe otherwise would mean having to go back a few pages and talk about “hope” again.

Being alone to be refreshed and renewed is a good thing. And sometimes being alone is healthy for our own personal spiritual growth. But when we focus only on what we can do without the help of others we begin to disconnect from our faith community and the kingdom that God is calling us to live into.

As we come to the end of this longer discussion, it might be important to think about what Jesus is not calling us to do. I do not think Jesus is concerned with how our candles get lit in worship. I do not think Jesus is concerned about whether the bread we eat at communion is a wafer or sourdough bread. I do not think Jesus is even concerned that we have confirmation only one night a week. But I think we can discern what Jesus is interested in from Matthew’s Gospel where we receive the great commission.

Jesus is concerned that we tell others about the life- and world-changing way of living that he is calling everyone to live. Jesus is concerned that we believe and live out loving others as he loved and living with others as he lived. Jesus is concerned with leading people into a life-changing experience where forgiveness and grace enter into their world and change them. This is the journey that we are called to join as Jesus’ disciples. We join a group of smelly fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes, diseased, ignored, and marginalized people into one great community of faith that sings a new song unto the Lord and discovers the cleansing power of Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Go and make more disciples! Teach them my ways of loving and living in the world. Serve them with humility. And lead them to the baptismal waters where forgiveness and mercy will change their lives forever." We hope you will join us in purposefully serving, teaching, and leading youth, young adults and families into the baptismal waters of life.

DISCIPLE

Focus: To create an understanding of accompaniment, relational ministry and the importance of living out your own discipleship as an example to others.

Objectives:

1. Learn what it means to be a "triple A adult": Authentic, Available and Affirming.
2. Discover that discipleship development is about building relationships.
3. Respond with a faith that is caught more than taught as our actions and example affect others in more ways than we will ever realize.

Bible Basis: *Matthew 28: 18-20*

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1 Corinthians 12: 12-13

"The body is a unity, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body....and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Materials: markers, paper, pieces of 1 foot PVC pipe cut in half the long way to create a trough, a marble and a container

Defining the Core Value:

Called to follow Christ, we are commanded to love one another. We follow Jesus in worship, in prayer, and in service remaining authentic, available and affirming.

Small Group Work: Break into small groups and have each group read the two suggested Bible passages. Invite them to discuss how these passages shape how they think about their role as a disciple. Have them discuss together what challenges of this call to make disciples might exist. Invite them to share what joys come from being a disciple.

Activity:

Begin by giving each participant a piece of PVC pipe and instruct them that they can only touch their piece of pipe and that they must hold it from underneath. The object of this activity is for the group to form a pipeline for the marble to get it from one end of the room to the other and drop it into a container. As they perform this task observe the conversation and dynamic.

Discussion: Afterwards have the group sit in a circle and talk about what they just did. You may wish to use the following questions to guide the conversation.

1. What did you do specifically? What was your experience?
2. What dynamics did you observe?
3. What do you think this has to do with Discipleship?

Invite them to close their eyes for a moment and visualize the most influential person they had on their faith journey, think of the characteristics of this person, what did this person do to make them feel special and or loved?

Have participants share in groups of up to 4 and make a list of characteristics. Bring the group back together and have them share what characteristics they remembered. Try and draw out the words: Authentic, Available and Affirming. Talk a little about these terms and that every person needs about 3 "triple A adults" in their lives. Let them know that at any one time a single adult can really only be a triple A adult to a handful of youth.

Thank them for being "triple A adults" and encourage them to keep up the awesome work they are doing with youth.

Developing a Plan:

Discover your congregation's unique approach to ministry with and through children, youth, young adults, and families. Join us in intentionally serving, teaching, and leading youth, young adults and families into the baptismal waters of life. Living in the waters of baptism is what this is all about – and when you wade in to these waters, you're bound to get drenched! We hope you get drenched in the Spirit as you encounter these ministries and as yours continues to grow through the grace of God!

Things We Discovered: (Use this space to jot down ideas and things your group learned from this process.)

Action Plan: (Use this space to make note of what actions you need to take to bring this core value into the fabric of your ministry.)

Jumping into the Pool:

5 Small Youth Ministry Leaps

By Steven A. Kennedy

For many youth ministries, fellowship becomes the primary, and sometimes, only expression of what happens in a congregation. Asking the question, "How can we keep kids in our church?" is not the best place to start this conversation. When we begin with this question we tend to think about ways to attract young people to God, often creating a program that does ministry to youth instead of with them. Focusing on ways to engage the faith lives of young people is a subtle shift but one that is important if we are trying to create life-changing disciples for Christ instead of a Lutheran Youth Club that looks more like something from the YMCA. Inevitably, churches tend to gather young people together, enticing them with pizza or other fun foods, and then play party games with little or no spiritual content. Gone from these opportunities are chances to discuss issues of spirituality, faith and daily living that young people desire. Instead they are treated to truly juvenile activities that simply waste time or keep youth busy.

If you have paid much attention to the schedule of any youth, whether in elementary school or high school, you will know that they are already scheduled beyond any normal human capacity. There are plenty of school-related activities (athletics, drama, music, clubs, etc.) that can keep students at school well past normal hours. Then there are the numerous civic sporting activities, or private lessons. Somewhere in that time, youth have to figure in some homework (often 3-5 hours would barely begin to make a dent in the often huge workloads that are facing some of our students), maybe even a part-time job, and just daily life.

A youth ministry that adds junky alternatives to other junky alternatives will not retain youth any more than it will adults. Finding that healthy balance that focuses on spiritual development and discipleship allows a ministry to offer something that truly is different than everything else. It will mean rethinking that what the church offers young people is not some program but a chance to engage in life-changing ministry. It may mean adopting some of the culture's tools (web-based interactive blogging, a Facebook or My Space account, etc.) or even using some aspects of media to engage and spark conversation. Everything that happens in the congregation should strive in a way allowing us all to discover together how to use our gifts to the glory of God. Along the way, we will be able to lift up new gifts that can be taken from our places of worship into the community and the halls of school and work.

Jesus did not gather his disciples together and then say "Go and play crab soccer." He did say "Go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). Although I think Jesus would have loved to play crab soccer once in a while, it is important to remember what we are all called to do: grow in our discipleship and make other disciples too. We Lutherans get a little nervous sometimes hearing the Great Commission of Matthew's Gospel as the sole guide to how ministry happens. And it is

not just this text that we should look at to discern God's calling on our own lives and ministry. But it does provide us with a launching point into a wonderful journey with others. Youth Ministry is primarily about relationships and authentic relationship building. Young people, and adults, desire to see that perfection is not the path to righteousness. As leaders, in our own flawed humanity, young people have an opportunity to witness grace in action.

In focusing on five key areas of ministry, one can easily see that Great Commission thinking underlying the broad outlines presented here. You can see this outlined quite fully through the Purpose-Driven ministry styles of Rick Warren and Saddleback Church. Doug Fields, who served on Saddleback's staff, provided a resource for youth workers as well in Purpose Driven Youth Ministry. The key for us as Lutherans to being able to appreciate these resources lies in how we view ministry and in our way of bringing people to the cross.¹⁴

In the Saddleback model there are various circles of people on different stages of discipleship that work towards an inner core achieved place of discipleship. That is a very simplified summarization of what Warren and Fields share and you should read through their unpacking of this model to fully appreciate what they discovered for their ministry. What I discovered though was that my experience of the Christian life and discipleship was just a lot messier than that.¹⁵ It was only when one of my former youth, then studying youth ministry at a Lutheran college, stopped by to interview me about my ministry style that I realized where the difference truly lay. She had realized the marks of Doug Fields' ministry structure in what we were accomplishing in our youth ministry. But she had not quite figured out why what we were doing there looked and felt somewhat different. I first told her that it was because we were Lutherans. While we laughed at this at first, it turns out that this was the key theological reality.

We start at the cross gazing and marveling at the grace contained there. It is a realization that nothing we do can change the unfailing love God shows us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Where we get lost though is when we spend all of our time gazing at the cross while others walk by not noticing the power contained therein. This is what Warren discovered and launched into ways to help people discover the Christian life through a variety of teaching and discipleship-building possibilities. The difference I discovered, though, was that those circles were a lot more fluid. Sometimes people are at the foot of the cross having momentarily achieved a kind of epiphany of sorts in their relationship to Christ and God. But more often, people tended to be moving forward and away from this center of the Christian faith. It was kind of like we are on bungee cords anchored at the cross and moving sometimes in free fall away from it only to be pulled inexorably back to Christ.

The realization of what I had been doing happened shortly thereafter during a baptism in worship. There in front of my eyes were the very words that had theologized and cemented the Great Commission. It made sense that I had somehow inadvertently (subconsciously?) stumbled into aligning and rooting youth ministry in the baptismal promises we all proclaim with each new

¹⁴ Check out the Lutheran Voices resource, People of Purpose: 40 Life Lessons from the New Testament by Robert Driver-Bishop. This resource includes components that parallel those by Rick Warren in his purpose-driven books and devotionals and is available through Augsburg Fortress.

¹⁵ I owe some of that realization to the many times I heard Mike Yaconelli speak, and more importantly his thoughts in Messy Spirituality.

candidate receiving this sacrament. Though the language in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is slightly revised, it is worth revisiting this rite and its language. To make it easier I have outlined some of those key phrases here¹⁶:

<i>Lutheran Book of Worship</i>	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i>
We are made members of the church	We are reborn children of God and made members of the Church, the body of Christ
We grow in faith, love, and obedience to God	Same
Faithfully bring <i>them</i> to the services of God's house	Live with them among God's faithful people;
Teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the 10 Commandments	Same
Place in their hands the Holy scriptures and provide for their instruction in the Christian Faith	Bring them to the word of God and the Holy Supper;... Nurture them in faith and prayer
Proclaim the praise of God	Proclaim Christ in word and deed
Bear his creative and redeeming Word to all the world	Care for others and the world God made

When we look closely at these phrases we can discern five key areas of ministry present here in some fashion. They are marks of healthy congregational ministry as well as of healthy youth ministry and consist of a balance between **Worship, Education, Stewardship, Outreach, and Fellowship**. Each of these are small leaps we can take on the springboard into a pool that drenches us in the amazing ministry to which God is calling each of us.

This resource gives you a starting point for ministry and a chance to open the conversation in your congregation to create a healthy and vibrant ministry for children, youth, and young adults. You will want to start the process by exploring the core values together with a team of youth and adults. As you work through your action plans, it will be helpful to have a general understanding of these five jumping off points for your new ministry. It is not enough to craft a purpose statement and expect great results. Time spent discovering ways to model the core values in the ministry will lead the process to a deeper appreciation of what God is calling your congregation to achieve.

WORSHIP

"Worship" is generally defined as a form of adoring reverence to God. It can take many expressions from one denomination to the next, and even from one congregation to the next. How you "worship" becomes a distinct part of the faith community you are in regardless of what you use to worship. A lot of times, the objects we use to worship God sometimes take on more significance than the actual act of worship. Regardless of what we use, how we use it, or even when we do it, worship is ultimately about God. Youth ministry is ultimately about connecting youth to God

¹⁶ From "Holy Baptism" pages 121-125, in Lutheran Book of Worship (Augsburg, 1978); and

through their relationships, so what better way to discover ways to build a young person's relationship with God than through the myriad ways of worship.

What does worship look like in your youth group? Attending a worship service and sitting together as a group every week is great but is often more about community building. I have been in congregations where the youth group stakes out an unoccupied or claimed pew in the middle of the sanctuary, in the front row, and more typically somewhere near the back; but, when many groups gather for their weekly, or monthly, time together as a youth group, worship tends to be absent.

When you type in the word "worship" at <http://thesaurus.reference.com/search?q=worship> (an on-line version of Roget's Thesaurus) you will see a number of words used to describe or define this word in different ways. Scroll down the page and you will see how the various verb substitutes for this word are quite numerous. Each word comes with its own shade of meaning and is open to personal interpretation. This portion of our resource is designed to help you unpack what each of these five primary areas of youth ministry can be in your ministry.¹⁷

Gather some of your leaders, both youth and adults, together and ask them this question: "**What one word comes to mind when you think of "worship"?**" Let the group say whatever comes to mind and write their one, or two-word phrases, down on a sheet of newsprint or blackboard. The key is to brainstorm as a group various things that are not adjectives, or descriptive words like "boring" or "interesting" or "moving," but rather things that help describe what worship is or does for people. It is not appropriate to make a decision about any of the words being right or wrong as people are brainstorming. After the brainstorming seems to have slowed down, take a moment and ask each person to pick their three favorite descriptions of those suggested. You can then begin eliminating the words not chosen and begin to fine tune a word that seems to resonate for your group. Once you have a word that stands out to the group, you need to write a "key question" to help shape the ministry activities you plan to do.¹⁸

For example, in one group that went through this process, many words were written on the easel pad. But the one that stood out for the group was "**gather.**" For this particular group, worship was a time that they gathered together to remind one another about God's direction and presence in their life.¹⁹ One version of their corresponding **key question** was "How will this activity **gather** us together as a community?" This question evolved for the group as they understood now what worship might be. They never had a lock-in without some form of worshipping activity (including communion), there was always some prayer-type activity, or a time to sing together a favorite song, whenever they "gathered."²⁰

¹⁷ Not too subtly, they are discussed in a personal preference of importance that goes from coming to know God; learning about the Christian life; discovering our personal giftedness of time, talent, and money; sharing the Gospel in the world; and learning to live together in community.

¹⁸ You will use this same process for each of the five areas discussed in this resource.

¹⁹ This also implies worship that is experiential and interactive. The word "service" has implications that something is done unto us instead of involving us.

²⁰ Remember that your group needs to come up with a word that has meaning for them. Give yourselves time to work through brainstorming each of these areas and then let the words you choose sit with your group for a while. This way you will know if they have the recognition and meaning you intend.

Including a time of worship in your youth activities is important to recognizing who we are as Christians in the world. Allowing youth to shape that time can bring them closer to understanding their own relationship to God and their place in the faith community. Worship does not imply an hour-long liturgically organized activity. It instead becomes a part of our daily living and the time we gather together in the broadest sense.

EDUCATION

Like many youth workers, I began my foray into Youth Ministry with a single request, "Would you like to teach the High School Sunday School Class?" Answering "Yes" took me on a road that has brought me closer to Christ and introduced me to hundreds, if not thousands, of young people living out their faith and growing in their discipleship.

But, after a few of those youth group nights where I came to hang with my Sunday School youth, I realized that something was missing. There is nothing wrong with coming together for some fun, but just like those first few meetings where we gathered without even so much as a shared prayer, I felt we were missing something else too.

"Discipleship" is the current buzzword replacing "education" these days. When we come together in our youth group setting, we need to make sure there is some aspect of growing as a disciple of Jesus. After all, we come together because we are followers of Jesus.²¹

There are plenty of ways to use a few minutes in your youth group time to get an important point across to your group. It can be about group building, a faith issue, something that youth in your area are struggling with (drug use, suicide, teen pregnancy, etc.). But there should be some time, in a devotion or other activity, where we hear the word of God and get a chance to think and discuss it. If we do not do this in our Youth Groups, where else will our teens get a chance to have this opportunity?

At some point you will discover that a devotion time, which can help set the theme or focus for an evening, will begin to differ from a learning time. Anytime you can find a way to incorporate active, hands-on learning you will see plenty of great growth. There are lots of places to find good active-learning Bible study activities. The key is that the group must also own what this looks like.

One of the greatest dangers Youth Ministry educational components is that they can come across as a top-down experience. That is to say, an adult, or anyone really, educates by telling a youth something using a lecture-based setting. This older teaching style just does not work well unless you are a very good charismatic leader...or Jesus. But then the teaching becomes less important

²¹ We need to remind ourselves that it is okay to speak about Jesus in our youth ministries and to lift this up as a mark of our Christian faith community.

than the teacher. Only Jesus was able to overcome that problem. So take a lesson from the master teacher and find ways to learn with your youth group. Discovering a way to facilitate teaching moments instead of directly leading them can be a great learning process for you too. Involving peer-to-peer learning opportunities is far more valuable than the old top-down teaching model. Finding a way to experience the lesson first hand creates a far more effective memory than a talk about faith.

Work with your group to brainstorm what education looks like using the same approach as outlined earlier with worship. This time, you will write down in your group the various words that symbolize education for your ministry. Help your leaders to include something in each youth group activity that will help explore this together.

STEWARDSHIP

Let's just start by saying that stewardship is a bit screwed up in most of our ministries. I have even been to national events where it has been confused with fundraising. Unfortunately, we spend a lot of time teaching our youth how to raise money and very little time teaching biblical stewardship. Fundraising for our own benefit is not stewardship. Fundraising is not necessary to "teach kids the value of money." If you want to help young people understand the value of money, you must give them the skills and tools to do so. If you want a youth ministry that focuses on true stewardship, then be sure that your congregational budget is adequate to fund the ministry you wish to see. Then when an opportunity to aid an organization or help out the community or global mission occurs, raising funds becomes about something other than your own ministry. Stewardship is not about ourselves, but about our relationship to God.

In Youth Ministry, it is important to look at stewardship in a broad way. First, there is the concept of "tithing." It is not hard to understand really, you give 10% of what you make back to God (a great way to start the 10-10-80 model: give 10, save 10, spend 80). You get \$100 in allowance money, \$10 goes to God's work (i.e., the offering). Learning about, and practicing, biblical stewardship is an important part in all ministry and teaching our young people how to approach stewardship in healthy ways is vital.

In the many fundraising events I led in my congregations, we wanted to model corporate stewardship of our resources as well. We had a policy that we always took 10% of what we raised to be given in the offering at that event. You raise \$5000, well, \$500 of that is going to the offering.²² The youth team in one congregation I served even decided that they wanted to give back 10% of their congregational budget that was assigned to them. It went to a variety of things and helped to do some of the servant ministry to the local women's shelter and a teen shelter. This

²² For a great resource: <http://www.10-10-80.org/>. "Share, Save, Spend" is a great way to introduce youth to tithing. Note though that of all the ministry areas we teach youth, stewardship is often the most convicting and painful. It's hard to teach giving 10% of their income if we are not working to achieve that faithfulness with our own giving.

was part of an ongoing discovery process that later included adopting Compassion children with their Sunday School offering.²³

Stewardship of our spiritual, God-given gifts is important. It is worthwhile to help people discover their spiritual gifts and to then help them discover ways to unite their passions to use those gifts to the glory of God. Plenty of spiritual gifts assessment tools exist that give youth a chance to have a conversation with someone about their gifts and how they can use them in ministry.²⁴ Doing this at the time of confirmation can help gently nudge young people into the ministry of the larger church and can connect them inter-generationally to others in your faith community.²⁵

One of the ongoing conversations I have had with people is trying to find a way to work towards a 10% giving of time to God. Setting aside 4 hours a week for your spiritual life (if we want to start small with a 40-hour work week) is really not a lot to ask, right? But how many of us spend about an hour in worship and then do nothing else the rest of the week? What if we each decided to set aside 10 minutes a day, Monday to Saturday, to just read the Bible? There's one hour. Now we still have 2 hours left, if we take 1 hour for worship. Hmmm, seems like we could be in a Bible Study group, give an hour to the local soup kitchen, maybe mentor a youth...the possibilities are truly endless.

God also calls us to be good stewards of the wonderful gift of creation. That means thinking about how we use natural resources, what we do with our garbage, how much garbage we create ourselves, and how our use, or misuse, of creation impacts others. It also means learning about how choices we make in our daily lives impact others throughout the world.²⁶

Take some time to consider what stewardship looks like for you as well. Use the same brainstorming technique discussed earlier to discover a word that really summarizes what stewardship means for your group. Then help your leaders to include something in each youth group activity that will help explore this together.²⁷ For many youth groups, this particular ministry area will see the most immediate outward impact as well as often lending itself to being resisted along the way.

²³ The Sunday School offering in this congregation was often used to fund our own youth to Confirmation Camp so the youth leadership decided to do something different with their offering and at one point was supporting three children through Compassion International.

²⁴ There are links to various spiritual gifts testing tools at our website: www.getdrenched.org.

²⁵ Many congregations “require” their confirmands to write a “faith statement” that is often a restatement of the Apostle’s Creed. Imagine what that document might look like if we placed additional emphasis on what believing meant to daily living as we grew in our discipleship and shared our spiritual gifts and God-given talents with one another in community and beyond!

²⁶ Be ready to expect to be impacted by these discoveries! In the early part of this decade, youth on the ELCA’s Board of the Lutheran Youth Organization challenged the churchwide office in Chicago to honor Fair Trade practices by switching to Equal Exchange coffee. If you know how much coffee your church uses, you can imagine the impact that switch would make!

²⁷ Consider using the Family Discipleship calendar available at the ELCA’s Christian Education webpage: www.elca.org/christianeducation/CEPlanner/index.html.

OUTREACH

So often, one hears of outreach that focuses on a group of well-intentioned people going out to serve a lower income bracket in the community. It becomes about what we can do for them. It is the group who goes out changes the most from these encounters. Outreach is about rediscovering our neighbor. Outreach is about discovering how others live differently than us. Outreach is about service to and with others. Outreach is about helping others to experience Jesus in their midst. Outreach might mean that a more diverse congregational community results from God's overpowering love expressed through the ministry in this way.

We can challenge our traditional understanding of outreach as more than just a servant project to build a house in Mexico, or cleaning up a highway—not that these in and of themselves are bad or good expressions. We need to start thinking about outreach as a sign of God's grace in the world. We can explore with one another what it means to truly share the Gospel with those who have not discovered Christ and change lives.

Outreach is all of the things mentioned and so much more. To get started, when was the last time you walked a few blocks around your church? A parable for you: I was in Tampa for the ELCA Youth Ministry Network convention and decided to go outside of the hotel for lunch. Each day I headed to the concierge desk for some suggestions. One day, the person there said there was a Quizno's a block away. Later, a different person said there was not anything around. Another person said that I'd need to get a cab to actually go to eat somewhere else. Then I thought, maybe if I change my question I would get still another answer.

My question was: Are there any restaurants within walking distance of the hotel? The responses did not change much. And mostly the answer was "No." Frustrated on a day that had a stretch of free time, I decided to find out for myself. Believe it or not, less than a 10 minute walk from the hotel there was a huge mall like area with several restaurants and even a movie theater.

It was then I realized that none of the people at that hotel knew their neighborhood. And, I also recalled that Jesus never took the camel express to get where he was going. Jesus walked...a lot!

Outreach is about taking a good long walk around your neighborhood. It is about discovering who lives there, what things look like there, what people do there. It's about asking how come no one from the elementary school four blocks away is connected to your church community. It's about knowing that the little locally-owned pizza parlor down the street is struggling since the new Domino's pizza opened a franchise in town.

Outreach is about reconnecting to the people in your community who have moved out. My wife has a passion to connect with college students and recently signed up on Facebook where she discovered that EVERY college student from our church had an account! She can now share

things directly with them faster than with email and create an instant connection. They will not feel forgotten.²⁸

What can outreach look like for your ministry? Use the same brainstorming technique to discover a word that really summarizes what outreach means for your group. Then help your leaders to include ways that you will help explore this together.

FELLOWSHIP

This is sometimes the primary entry point for most youth. In fact, even adults choose a church or group because of how they were welcomed and engaged apart from some specific program or idea. When Youth Ministry positions are posted, being able to have fun with the youth group is often a primary requirement (often stated as being able to “relate to kids”). Having fun is one thing, but it is not the only thing and that is why I have placed fellowship as the final leap into youth ministry.

Fellowship allows a ministry to learn how to be welcoming and hospitable to one another. It opens the door for everyone in the church or youth group to feel that they can find a place here in the midst of the group. Games played during youth group activities can build group unity and encourage interaction across the board. Sometimes these fellowship experiences become life-changing events.

When I first began youth ministry, many youth group games seemed a lot like tame adult party games. There were games where kids ate marshmallows suspended on strings (with the joke being that once they were blindfolded, one of the marshmallows got dipped in chocolate creating quite a mess). Balloons often found a way to be used in a variety of ways, the best and most interesting involving shaving cream. As soccer gained in popularity, it was common to play some variant as well at youth group.

Most of the time, high-energy games were intended to burn some energy so that we could move into discussion or bible study times. The game time was simply another way to engage each other.

²⁸ A word about using internet social utility tools is apropos here. Facebook is a great tool for ministry that allows you to connect people to opportunities. Group pages can be set up as “closed” groups where an administrator (i.e., you) decides who gets to join the group. There are several new tools on the market being designed specifically for church groups to use as in-house communication tools, and Facebook will likely be replaced by some “cooler” and more cutting edge internet tool as well. Keep some perspective in mind while using this and other tools in your ministry by not letting those who abuse the tool govern its use. As I often remind people, Microsoft Word is a tool as well. It allows us to write a term paper, a sermon, a devotion or a letter. But it is a tool that can also be used to write pornography. Such is the way of internet social utility networks when they are used appropriately. They are tools that we can use to be leaven in a world that seems to have lost the ability to determine the difference.

Larger group games began the time together so that people arriving could jump right in and play. Choosing teams was just not an option.

Fun and game activities in youth group serve a purpose. They can relate to a point you wish to make later in your time together. A game can be used to illustrate a teaching point as well as be played just for fellowship. Though in the former case, it helps to frame the activity differently to make the group aware of the transition from a fellowship to a learning activity.

The biggest problem with games in youth group is the tendency to overplay the favorite ones. Many times a youth leader would come to me and ask how I kept young people's interest in a particular game. The statement would be something like: "When we first started playing crab soccer everyone had a blast. In fact, the first couple of months we even started to improve...." Of course, therein lay the problem. Any game can be fun once in a while, but variety makes them stay that way. It does not take long for your group to be enthusiastic about a game one month and then begin to stay away if they know you are planning it for your group activity. A way to let the diehard fans of a game play it for longer stretches is to schedule it during a lock-in where they can play it during free time.

Fellowship is an important part of youth ministry. Modeling healthy fellowship by making sure everyone feels welcome and that we work to avoid small group cliques helps to create community in your youth ministry. Discovering how that plays out for your ministry will lead to many opportunities for the personal growth of the people who come into contact with your youth group.

There is not much more one can say about this particular aspect of youth ministry other than to allow your group to discern a way to understand and focus the activity the same way you would with the other aspects of youth ministry outlined earlier.

GET READY

Core questions guide and create a ministry that will impact the lives of youth and adults. The core questions, or key words, will begin to shape the ministry and you will discover that they allow you to say “Yes” and “No” to the many “great ideas” that come your way. Every idea becomes possible when you work together to insure that it can answer the core questions you developed for the ministry. Once you uncover these core values, and work through an understanding of the ways your ministry will express the five general ministry areas, you will want to incorporate at least three of these five leaps every time you gather. It might seem difficult at first, but you will soon realize that you are already doing many of these things, while there also may arise some glaring holes in the ministry.

Another important component for your ministry will be to discover the assets that your faith community has to use. There are an abundance of assets in every congregation. Sometimes, you just need to figure out how to see them. You might consider exploring assets through an “asset-mapping process.” People in our synod have been trained to run this process with your group and you can find out how to explore this ministry tool by going to the website: www.getdrenched.org.

All of these ministry leaps are important to developing healthy youth and family ministry. Together with the core values outlined in this resource, all of us involved in this work pray that they can lead to life-changing ministry in your congregation.

Selective Reading Suggestions

*Note: This selective book list is not intended to be exhaustive! It includes a number of resources Steve has used over his career in Youth and Family Ministry and which various members of the Get Drenched Team have found helpful. We have tried to point you to some key resources by **bolding** these below.*

Children's Ministry

Robert Coles, **The Spiritual Life of Children**

Marva J. Dawn, **Is it a Lost Cause? - Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children**

Thomas A. Droege, Faith Passages and Patterns

Jolene L. Roehlkepartain, **Children's Ministry that Works!: The Basics and Beyond**

Thom & Joani Schultz, **The Dirt on Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church**

Family Ministry

Don Hebbard, Family Ministry in the Church

Richard P. Olson & Joe H. Leonard, Jr., A New Day for Family Ministry

Charles Sell, **Family Ministry**

Merton Strommen, Five Cries of Youth

M.P. & A.I. Strommen, Five Cries of Parents

Marjorie J. Thompson, Family, A Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation

Young Adult Ministry

Colleen Carroll, The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy

Terry Hershey, **Young Adult Ministry**

Geoffrey T. Holtz, Welcome to the Jungle: The Why Behind "Generation X"

Neil Howe & Bill Strauss, **13th Generation: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?**

————, **Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation**

Alexander Robbins and Abby Wilner, Quarterlife Crisis: The Unique Challenges of Life in Your Twenties

Ethan Watters, Urban Tribes: Are Friends the New Family?

Youth Ministry

- George Barna, Generation Next: What You Need to Know About Today's Youth
———, Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ
———, Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture
- Carl A. Blunt, The Secret of the Simple Youth Ministry
- Bob Briner, Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World
- Kenda Creasy Dean, Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church
- Doug Fields, Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth
Group Publishing, Reaching Kids Most Youth Ministries Miss
- Michael Gurian, A Fine Young Man: What Parents, Mentors, and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men
- Patricia Hersch, A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of Adolescence
- Dan Kindlon & Michael Thompson, Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys
- Jimmy Long, Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation
- Margaret J. Meeker, Restoring the Teenage Soul: Nurturing Sound Hearts and Minds in a Confused Culture
- Grace Palladino, Teenagers: An American History
- Mary Pipher, Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls
———, The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding Our Families
- William Pollack, Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood
- Lynn E. Ponton, The Romance of Risk: Why Teenagers Do the Things They Do
———, The Sex Lives of Teenagers: Revealing the Secret World of Adolescent Boys and Girls
- Wayne Rice, Junior High Ministry
- Duffy Robbins, The Ministry of Nurture: A Youthworker's Guide to Discipling Teenagers
- John Rosemond, Teen-Proofing: A Revolutionary Approach to Fostering Responsible Decision Making in Your Teenager
- Mark H. Senter, gen. ed., Wesley Black, Chap Clark, & Malan Nel, Four Views of Youth Ministry: Inclusive Congregational; Preparatory; Missional; Strategic
- Merton Strommen, Karen E. Jones, and Dave Rahn, Youth Ministry That Transforms
- Mike Yaconelli & Jim Burns, High School Ministry

Culture Studies

- Russell W. Dalton, Faith Journey Through Fantasy Lands: A Christian Dialogue with Harry Potter, Star Wars, and the Lord of the Rings
- Dan Korem, Suburban Gangs: The Affluent Rebels
- Walt Mueller, Understanding Today's Youth Culture
- National Collaboration for Youth, Screening Volunteers to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Community Guide for Youth Organizations
- Connie Neal, The Gospel According to Harry Potter: Spirituality in the Stories of the World's Most Famous Seeker
- Mark I. Pinsky, The Gospel According to 'The Simpsons': The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family

Quentin Schultze, Roy M. Anker, et. Al. Dancing in the Dark: Youth, Popular Culture and the Electronic Media

Jean M. Twenge, Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable than Ever Before

Ralph C. Wood, The Gospel According to Tolkein: Visions of the Kingdom of Middle-earth

Wendy Murray Zorba, Generation 2K: What Parents Need to Know about the Millennials

Personal/Spiritual Growth

Dr. Lauren Artress, Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool

Kenda Creasy Dean & Ron Foster, The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending in Youth Ministry

Michael W. Foss, Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Culture

Donald Miller, Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality

Luther Snow, The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on its Gifts

Greg Ogden, Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time

Tim Smith, Nurturing the Soul of the Youth Worker: 8 Ways to Energize Your Life and Ministry

Mike Yaconelli, Dangerous Wonder: The Adventure of Childlike Faith

————, Messy Spirituality: God's Annoying Love for Imperfect People

New Bible Translations

John Henson, Good As New: A Radical Retelling of the Scriptures

Rob Lacey, The Word on the Street

Eugene Peterson, The Message: Remix