



Sabbath Practices Ministry Kit for Young Adults

Prayer, Storytelling, Hospitality, Service and Retreat

Introduction

“Young adult” is a broad term. You could refer to this ministry kit if you are working with college students, older youth, young professionals or simply along-side our adult ministry kit as you consider your setting. Practices can be effective for young adults who are looking for meaning in their faith lives and can be a very approachable way to introduce Christianity in a college setting. In using the age specific ministry kits keep in mind that the idea is that practices are introduced with generations individually and with all ages together to form intergenerational faith communities. Use this ministry kit alongside the essential tools for each practice as you teach and guide young adults in your community. Many of the practices will be engaged in at the same time and naturally flow from age specific to intergenerational. Each of the 5 practices in this ministry kit have a section of things to consider, ways to engage and a resource list is provided at the end of the kit. The kit is meant as a guide and a launch pad for leaders.

Practicing Prayer with Young Adults

“I need a God who is bigger and more nimble and mysterious than what I could understand and contrive. Otherwise it can feel like I am worshipping nothing more than my own ability to understand the divine.” – Nadia Bolz-Weber (Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint)

Things to Consider

Developing a personal prayer practice may be a new concept to young adults at this point in their faith development. And even if prayer is a familiar practice for them, the nature of their prayers may be new territory for them as their needs and experiences change from youth to adult.



There is bound to be a wide spectrum of experience with prayer in any group of young adults. Exploring a variety of types and techniques for prayer would be a great way to engage young adults and help them find a meaningful practice of their own

Prayer is very ritualistic and providing opportunities to practice this ritual could be helpful to young adults as they begin to make prayer their own.

Don't make any assumptions about what young adults know or don't know about prayer. Be careful not to embarrass them or make them feel like there is something that they should have known, as that could easily shut them down.



Engaging in Prayer

Have a discussion and meditation on the emotions that compel us to pray. What are the emotions that can prompt us to pray? Identifying emotions like fear, grief, sadness, happiness, worry, loneliness, love, and awe is an ideal place to begin. Then explore what happens with these emotions? How can connecting with God via prayer help us in these feelings.

Have a discussion on committing to prayer in our busy lives. Have a practical discussion and/or writing exercise that explores the daily and weekly rhythms in our lives where prayer may be a natural companion: mealtimes, bedtimes, while running or walking, over a morning cup of coffee, etc. How can we invite God into these moments?

Prayer groups. Start small groups that will have the purpose of praying for one another, the community and the world. Intentionally create these as online groups so that the group can continue to meet even as they may change physical locations. The group can also practice different ways to pray.

Practice different ways to pray.

- Pray through reading poetry silently or aloud.
- Pray through listening to or playing music.
- Pray by walking a labyrinth.
- Meditate or simply be still for a few minutes each day.
- List or journal all that you are grateful for each day.
- Set aside your worries for God to handle, by writing them on a sheet of paper and putting them in a jar or box.
- Draw, paint, sculpt, photograph or color a mandala.
- Light a candle or burn incense, be still and use your sense of smell to be fully present with God.
- Read the news (paper or feed), and as you are compelled with emotion say out loud or silently “God in your mercy, hear our prayer.”



Practicing Storytelling with Young Adults

“Human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.” – C.S. Lewis (Mere Christianity)

Things to Consider

Young adults often state that they seek authentic connections and are drawn to communities that elicit this sentiment. Is our church community being authentic? Are we finding opportunities to share our stories, to build connections and community? There is nothing more vulnerable than sharing our stories with one another. But there is also nothing more unifying than hearing a story to which we identify and that allows us to bridge heart to heart connections with another.



Storytelling can be a profound experience for young adults. As young adults come of age and begin to form and express their own identities, this experience can give them the power to discover their own voice. Who are they as individuals separate from their parents? What are their experiences, their hopes?

Coming of age in the era of social media, young adults might have experienced some story-telling fatigue. They have had much of their lives on display in public and have seen the ways that social media has often created a false narrative rather than the “true story.” By finding ways for them to craft their own stories privately and in small groups, we again, can give them the power to tell the story as it truly is, not just the “Christmas card” version.

Engaging in Storytelling

Who are we like? Sometimes at first it might be easier to identify with characters or storylines than with our own stories. Using Biblical stories, books, movies or songs – ask young adults to compile a list of characters, scenes or lyrics that they identify with.

Writing or journal challenge. Give young adults a series of weekly questions to write or journal about to help them learn how to express their faith stories.

Tell a visual story. Use a form of visual art to practice storytelling. Create a series of works that illustrate markers of your faith journey.

Learn the art of listening. For every story, there is an audience. How can we learn to be good storytellers, but also good listeners? In pairs, ask one participant to share part of their story, and ask the other participant to simply listen – they cannot nod, interject or



comment. Just listen. Then ask the partners to swap roles. Afterwards, discuss how it felt to be listened to and how it felt to listen.

Make a faith journey map. Where have each of our journeys taken us? Are there places that we all have visited (grief, hope, despair, longing, confusion)? Using items that are tactile, like pushpins and different colored string, make a bulletin board at church in which we can map each of our journeys and visually see where we connect.

Faith journeys series. Invite members of your church community to share their faith journeys in a weekly or monthly forum. Invite young adults to both participate by sharing as well as to help moderate.

Learn the art of biblical storytelling. Bring in a workshop leader who can train the young adults in this craft or watch videos of biblical storytellers to learn more about this art form.



Practicing Hospitality with Young Adults

“The only meaningful thing we can offer one another is love. Not advice, not questions about our choices, not suggestions for the future, just love.” – Glennon Melton (Carry On, Warrior: Thoughts on Life Unarmed)

Things to Consider

Today’s young adults are pre-disposed for hospitality. They have grown up in a generation that has been more understanding and welcoming of individuals with differing backgrounds, abilities, orientations, identities and expressions than ever before. Their schools actively taught anti-bullying, acceptance and inclusion. And they have been part of a church that has changed the definition of marriage within its constitution during their foundational years.



Young adults may have a broader scope of hospitality than the generations before them. Their markers of hospitality may extend beyond inclusion and acceptance to concepts like diversity of voice and leadership. Therefore, they may be able to model hospitality in new and expanding ways that our congregations and communities can learn from.

We may be asked “why” or “why not” more in terms of hospitality than ever before. Young adults are bound to challenge our thinking and process in this area. Let us allow them to do this. Young adults are establishing their adult identities in every way including hospitality. What does it look like for them to host? How do they differentiate themselves from their parents?

Engaging in Hospitality

Have a discussion on the concept of “invitation.” Ask participants to consider what “invitation” means to them. Meditate on what Christ’s invitation to the table meant, and the ways that we can model this virtue. How do our interactions with others radiate “invitation?”

Have a discussion on the concept of “radical hospitality.” What are the ways that we can be better at connecting with our neighbors, hearing their stories and recognizing their human dignity? Can we hear their needs, rather than make assumptions of how we can help them? What does it look like to answer their call to help, rather than our offer to “do what we always do” to help?

Consider hospitality beyond faith community walls. Explore the ways that the faith community can look beyond extending welcome into its worship and programs. Begin to



seek out ways that the faith community can join with other communities in need. What does it look like to stand and work beside others, without the need to “fix or solve?”

Begin a monthly “dinner church” led by young adults. By breaking bread and sharing a meal with others, we are brought into unity with one another. Dinner church can be a great way to welcome individuals into the church that might typically feel uncomfortable or unwanted in a traditional sanctuary-based worship service.

Involve young adults in the work of the deacons and care teams. Can young adults provide pastoral care for other young adults? Perhaps those who are new to the area, and do not have family nearby are an untouched part of the community.



Practicing Service with Young Adults

“Compassion- which means, literally, "to suffer with"- is the way to the truth that we are most ourselves, not when we differ from others, but when we are the same. Indeed, the main spiritual question is not, "What difference do you make?" but "What do you have in common?" It is not "excelling" but "serving" that makes us most human. It is not proving ourselves to be better than others but confessing to be just like others that is the way to healing and reconciliation.” – Henri Nouwen

Things to Consider

Young adults are experienced with community service, in fact, they might be burned out on it. In conjunction with church, school, scout troops, sports and other activities community service was prevalent and might have included minimum time commitments, therefore instilling a feeling of “obligation” rather than choice.



In working with a young adult group, they may benefit from discussion related to how they feel called to serve, and how they can utilize their specific gifts and talents. Young adults are good at seeing the broader picture of a particular need and may develop a deeper commitment to a cause or issue if they can be part of designing a solutions-based approach rather than folding into an existing service opportunity.

As this generation emerges as adults, they will have to wrestle with a lifetime of growing up with “stranger danger.” While they have grown up more accepting of those who appear different than them, they also have been inundated with fear related to interacting with strangers. They will have to learn to feel safe to do outreach. This will require some vulnerability on their side, and some empathy on the side of organizers.

Engaging in Service

Access your region’s Community Needs Assessment and look for areas to respond. A Community Needs Assessment determines the underlying causes and conditions of poverty within the community they serve. Are there major community needs that your church or group of young adults is well-suited to address? How can you explore partnering with agencies and business to serve this need?

Create a space and forum for community agencies and needs. What ways can your church or ministry be a space for community agencies to meet, host events, and engage with your members? Does your ministry have space to house a food pantry, clothing ministry or housing for refugees or migrants in need? What about office space? How can young adults work to build these programs or services?



Have a discussion related to where young adults feel called to serve. Explore different areas of interest or community need (food insecurity, housing insecurity, migrant rights, the environment) and then research and connect with local social service agencies working on these issues to determine where and how the group can serve.

Examine existing service opportunities connected with the church. Find out how young adults can join into existing service opportunities, or if there is a potential offshoot to existing programs that young adults can focus on. If you are in a college ministry, partner with an area church for work with one of their mission partners.

Connect with campus ministry programs and campus service organizations at area colleges. Even if your church doesn't have a college ministry are there partnership opportunities available to join forces for local service work?

Commit to an ongoing fundraising initiative. Organizations like Dining for Women are creating social impact and change while also building community connections. Is there a local or global cause that could inspire young adults following a similar model?

Build a Grassroots Advocacy Team in conjunction with the Office of Public Witness PCUSA.

Connect with a YAV group, if local to your community. Inquire as to opportunities to connect. Or host an information session about the program for young adults to learn more about the program and how to apply



Practicing Retreat with Young Adults

“In solitude, at last, we’re able to let God define us the way we are always supposed to be defined—by relationship: the I-thou relationship, in relation to a Presence that demands nothing of us but presence itself. Not performance but presence.” – Richard Rohr

Things to Consider

Today’s young adults bridge the Generation Y (Millennial) and the Generation Z age groups. They have experienced an increasing presence of technology and media throughout their lives and have never known a world absent of cell phones, the internet, and social media. This connection to, or dependency on, technology is an important factor to consider when designing retreat experiences. As a retreat leader for young adults, you may consider providing information in advance of a retreat about expectations around technology use, so that the young adults can prepare accordingly. You may also consider providing times within the retreat schedule that allow for technology use, and other times that encourage “unplugging.”



Young adults have a deep desire to be connected, and a retreat experience will provide an optimal experience to develop and renew these connections in person. A successful retreat experience will likely combine highly structured group activities that initiate group connections as well as loosely structured activities to foster more one on one connections and allow for personal reflection experiences.

Many young adults thrive on leadership opportunities and being active participants in the planning process for retreats or providing onsite leadership may be a great way to engage them in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Sometimes, with young adults, it is important to step aside. Although they have already “flown the nest” and live independently, they still can view older adult leadership as authoritative. It might be well-received and impactful to allow for time and space within the retreat for the young adults to gather on their own.

Engaging in Retreat

Create a space that could be transformed into a reflective or retreat space. Initiate a project to build a Labyrinth or add benches and landscaping to a space either on your property or partnering with a church that has property. Also consider indoor spaces that could be easily modified to become a meditation or prayer space.



Provide on-going opportunities for regular “mini-retreats.” Plan regularly scheduled hiking, biking or other active outings that include a time to share over a meal or beverage.

Live into the feeling of retreat reflection exercise. Ask each participant to imagine a time that they have felt at peace. Being as descriptive as possible, using all their senses, ask them to describe how they felt at this time. Where were they? Who were they with? What did the air feel like? What are the smells associated with that time? Ask them to consider ways that some of these elements could be incorporated more regularly into their lives, and to describe other barriers that might prevent them from making these experiences a priority in their lives.

Gather for a topic-based book-club or bible-study as a group in advance of going on an off-site retreat. This can help the group begin to build connections and to pique interest in the topic beforehand.

Establish retreat teams to assist in planning and coordination of aspects of a retreat. The teams can provide service to the event, while also providing an opportunity to showcase individual gifts and talents. Teams might include food and hospitality, music and worship, devotion leading and recreation and games.

Practice forest bathing. Embark on a day trip to an area park or green space and lead the group through a guided meditative walk.



Where can I learn more?

Books

Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint by Nadia Bolz-Weber. Jericho Books, 2014.

Sensible Shoes: A Story about the Spiritual Journey by Sharon Garlough Brown. IVP Books, 2013.

The Joy of Forest Bathing: Reconnect with Wild Places & Rejuvenate Your Life by Melanie Choukas-Bradley and Lieke van der Vost. Rock Point, 2018.

The Pilgrimage by Paulo Coelho. HarperOne, 2008.

The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh. Beason Press, 1999.

Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers by Anne Lamott. Riverhead Books, 2012.

Mere Christianity, revised edition by C. S. Lewis. HarperSanFrancisco, 2009.

Carry On, Warrior: Thoughts on Life Unarmed by Glennon Doyle Melton. Scribner, 2013.

Start Something That Matters by Blake Mycoskie. Random House, 2012.

Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love by Lonni Collins Pratt. Paraclete Press, 2011.

Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference by Letty M. Russell. Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor. HarperOne, 2020.

Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters--and How to Talk About It by Krista Tippett. Penguin Books, 2008.

Curriculum

[Love An Other](#) by Denise Anderson. Theocademy.

[The Barefoot Way: A Faith Guide for Youth, Young Adults, and the People Who Walk with Them](#) by Dori Grinenko Baker. Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

[Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service, Leader Guide and Participant Workbook, Revised and Updated](#) by Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile. Abingdon Press, 2011.

[How We Think About Prayer](#) by Donald K. McKim and Carol Wehrheim. The Thoughtful Christian, 2009.



[*The Basics of Prayer*](#) by Donald K. McKim and Carol Wehrheim. The Thoughtful Christian, 2009.

[*The Things that Make for Peace*](#) *Adult Bible Study*. A Season of Peace, PC(USA)

Online Resources

[Dining for Women.](#)

[Dinner Church.](#)

[Echo Prayer.](#)

[“Grassroots Advocacy Teams.”](#) Office of Public Witness, PC(USA).

[“Guide for Young Adult Ministry.”](#) *Presbyterians Today*.

[Headspace.](#)

[“Mary Oliver Reads her Poem, ‘I Happened To Be Standing.’”](#) The On Being Project, 2015.

[“Practicing Radical Hospitality.”](#) Metropolitan Council of MN.

[Prayer Works.](#)

[PrayerMate.](#) Discipleship Tech.

[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.](#)

[The Calm Booth.](#) Room.

[UKirk Collegiate Ministries.](#)

[“Upstanders: The Mosque Across the Street.”](#) 2016.

[“What is Radical Hospitality.”](#) United Methodist Church.

[“Young Adult Volunteers.”](#) PC(USA).