



Sabbath Practices Ministry Kit for Youth

Hospitality, Prayer, Service, Storytelling and Retreat

introduction

It is important to connect youth with the sabbath practices that the rest of the faith community is engaging in. Youth are often engaged in peer groups in the church and practices are a natural way to keep them engaged with the rhythms and rituals happening in the whole church. 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 youth 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 Hospitality with Youth

Hospitality is a necessary act of preparation that invites us into God's time. - Becky D'Angelo- Veitch

things to consider

Some youth may not know what it is like to offer hospitality to others because there are trends in society that have prohibited youth from doing certain things for themselves, and secondarily others.



The concept of friendship to youth can be evolving. Be careful about using that word to describe what it means to be hospitable.

Hospitality does not have to be reciprocal. We do not offer hospitality with the expectation that we will get something back in return. Hospitality affirms the worth of all God's people.

engaging in hospitality

Thank you notes. Have youth write thank-you notes to everyone who makes an offer of hospitality or generosity for their ministries or programs. Watch for youth that engage in hospitality practices in everyday actions and affirm that with a written note from other youth or adult leaders.

Intentional hospitality hosts. Consider how you can be hospitable to new people in youth spaces. Appoint youth to welcome other youth, and to introduce them to people.



Engage in a conversation about language. How can we modify our language –both verbal and body language to be more hospitable? Guide youth through a process of evaluating common language used in your gatherings, in your church and in your community. How can they be leaders in changing language?

Hosting a Love Feast. This is different than a Eucharistic meal, in order to eat, one must be served.

Consider our spaces. Take a look at physical and virtual spaces where the life of the youth and the church takes place. Have youth be involved in a process of evaluating those spaces based on the lens of hospitality. Are they welcoming to strangers? Those with physical or other limitations? Consider hosting a celebration for sextons, janitors, and maintenance people who work diligently in the physical spaces. Have youth assist in making our virtual spaces more welcoming.



Practicing Prayer with Youth

“I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.” — C.S. Lewis

things to consider

There is no right way to pray. Often, we ask youth to pray in front of a group and they get nervous that they are not doing it right. If we focus on a “right” way to pray, we risk inadvertently scaring youth away from prayer.



As youth mature through adolescents it can seem that nothing seems constant. It is not uncommon for youth to question authority and institutions, alike. Helping youth in developing a habit or practice of prayer can offer them a companion and a constant even if they are figuring out how they feel about church and faith.

Prayer is often the last thing we do when we gather. Sometimes it can seem as if it is an afterthought. How we model prayer in our times of fellowship and community matters. If we want prayer to be important to youth, we need to make it a priority.

Prayer is a conversation. It involves both listening and speaking. All too often we think prayer is just about us speaking to God. Youth need to understand that prayer is about listening. Sometimes that listening can be uncomfortable.

Consider not making prayer appear as a punishment. Games like “nose goes” or “voluntelling” by others can make prayer seem like a punishment. Engage in conversations about the blessing an opportunity to pray on behalf of others.

engaging in prayer

Consider prayer being the first and last thing. Gatherings and meetings in our denomination are to begin with prayer. This provides natural times to experiment and experience a variety of prayer practices throughout the year.

Liturgical calendars offer opportunities. Advent and Lent already lend themselves to a different patterning of time, these are great times to introduce the importance of prayers as well as new ways of praying to youth. Prayer stations are a good way to explore the church seasons.



Prayer journals. Ask youth to bring their own journal or provide them with journals so they can doodle or write prayers down in all of your gatherings including youth group, church retreats, worship etc. There are a variety of pocket-sized journals out there.

Biblical prayers. Help youth understand that prayer is not new. Draw from the psalms or The Lord's Prayer as a start to exploring prayer in the Bible.

Engage multiple intelligences when praying with youth. Try things like the body and breath prayer for kinesthetic learners. Youth can also teach prayers with motions to younger and older generations. This is an excellent way for them to lead prayer in an online platform.

Intergenerational prayer partners. Pair youth with adults or children and have them share prayer requests among each other. Make sure that there are opportunities for continued prayerful relationships while adhering to safe sanctuary guidelines.

Consider holding a prayer vigil at least once a year. The focus of this vigil can be prayer in general or specific to a topic close to the youth's heart. This is an excellent way for youth to lead in the church and for all generations to know what youth care about.

Silence is powerful. Youth live noisy and busy lives, what would it look like to offer times of silence during your gatherings. At first it may be uncomfortable but eventually youth may come to cherish it.



Practicing Service with Youth

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” – Mahatma Gandhi

things to consider

Some non-profits and agencies have age restrictions. Make sure that your church has some partnerships that allow for youth to fully engage.

Youth are often interested in being part of something that is bigger than themselves; service allows that opportunity.



Service can be done as an individual and community.

Acts of service happen in our everyday lives as well in well planned activities.

We serve so that we can be changed. All too often we conflate service with charity.

Use partnership language with youth. Make sure they fully understand why you are engaging in a particular mission trip or service activity.

Planning for mission trips should include very intentional preparation on the area you are going to and what you will be doing and what you will be learning about. Consider policies about required planning and preparation for every youth participating in a mission trip.

Be aware of “mountain-top” experiences on mission trips. Make sure youth are equipped to come home and use these experiences to be agents of change in their own communities.

Service should also involve storytelling practices.

engaging in service

Establish a relationship with a local school ‘s kindergarten classroom. Through this relationship opportunities to serve can last through those students 5th grade year. Ongoing relationships help to secure ongoing connections and genuine relationship.

Adopt a day of the month or even quarterly for a day of local service. Consult the interests of youth and any partner agencies of the church. Build upon established partnerships and activities.



Have ongoing collections Decide for the year what sorts of items and for whom youth will collect. Involve youth in researching organizations that your church partners with and determining what items are most helpful for these organizations. This is a good way to have conversations about earth stewardship as well. Youth can also lead collection events for the congregation, and this is a way to connect all the generations in service.

Serving through care of creation. Pick up trash in a community that might be neglected, plant gardens in communities that have food deserts and learning about climate change are some ideas. Partner with your camp and conference center for a work camp that cares for that space.

Community Garden. Set aside a plot of land for a community garden. Ask Master Gardeners to plot the garden and guide the practice. Invite neighbors to claim plots of the garden to plant and till. Provide the seeds and seedlings. Help your neighbors keep their garden weed-free. Perhaps include a request that plot owners give one tenth of their produce to the church to be shared in a local food pantry or soup kitchen or with homebound people in the neighborhood who cannot garden for themselves.

Consider how youth can serve through their purchases. Are there ways that they can support local, national, or international causes through their discretionary income? We often can figure out what we value by how we spend our money.

Short-term mission trips. Sometimes getting away allows youth to see both systems, issues, and how they can get involved in different ways. You can make it local in your community or go further away but consider the cost of these trips and how funds could also be used to promote economic independence for agencies and various economic structures.

Random acts of kindness challenge. The reward is internal, but the competition can inspire great deeds of kindness.



Practicing Storytelling with Youth

Storytelling helps youth to root our individual identities in a covenant community. Covenant community acknowledges that the story is always bigger than us and that the story of God has been on going.

things to consider

Storytelling provides a way for us to connect to our siblings in Christ, and the larger humanity and can provide space for vulnerability and authenticity.



Youth need to know that when sharing or being vulnerable in the practice of storytelling it is important to know that they must share their own story without implicating others in a story that the other might not want to be told.

Mentors, teachers, and youth leaders should be equipped to ask youth questions that lead to the youth being able to speak candidly about God's work in their live, this is easiest when these instrumental adults are also trained in storytelling and they regularly share their own stories with youth.

Listening well is an important part of storytelling.

Storytelling has always been the way in which God's story of salvation and redemption has been passed on through communities.

engaging in storytelling

Create a Covenant. Consider that for youth to feel comfortable sharing stories there must be a community that is both safe and trustworthy. Often youth create covenants, consider ways that you can tell the story of famous Israelite covenants with God that lift up the importance of safety and trustworthiness.

Use the Biblical narrative to practice storytelling. Putting ourselves in the narrative can be a way to introduce storytelling. Have youth pick a character in a popular biblical text and write or present a first-person account from the perspective of that character.

Using media. Whether the media is print, digital, or social it is a medium of communication. During a specific period of time invite youth to tell a story using media. This can be used for sharing mission stories and youth events. Consider having youth interview older generations and present this to the congregation via various forms of media.



Small groups based on age, gender or similar interest. It is often easier to share stories in small groups. Perhaps beginning with leaders and given a rubric, youth could share their own faith stories. Adults should be full participants in this group setting sharing their stories and modeling for youth.

Practice Examen with youth. This will help them to be already looking for what God is doing in their lives.

Read memoirs of a young person or watch a documentary or biopic about someone. This gives youth a better understanding of what good storytelling can do or how it can be significant.



Practicing Retreat with Youth

Retreat allows us to intentionally recalibrate our lives to the rhythms of grace.

things to consider

Retreat helps pattern a different way of life together for youth.

Retreat is an identity forming opportunity for young people to understand what it means to be church, to be hospitable, and to be beloved both as individuals and in community.



When we participate in retreat, we face the truth of our humanity. This often happens when we are either physically or emotionally challenged through the retreat experience.

Retreat allows youth to pause and breath differently, which can be refreshing for the anxious, overcommitted, and busy youth we often engage with.

Consider when and where would be a good time and place for youth to retreat. Is it before or after standardized test? Are there particular rhythms in the liturgical or your specific church or youth calendar that lend themselves to retreat?

Consider sharing about how retreating has affected you or other adults involved in the ministry. When we model storytelling and retreat as Sabbath practices, we invite youth to do the same.

Consider what denominational resources or camps and conference centers in your presbytery or synod you can connect with to provide space for retreat.

engaging in retreat

Create spaces for retreat. Where in our buildings or youth rooms are there spaces to have moments of retreat? Can youth help create these spaces? Is there a way to have a labyrinth, a prayer room etc.

Use guided meditations for youth during high stress times in their lives. This can be done virtually or in-person whenever specific world or local events occur or when something personal has happened.

Partnering with other churches or organizations. Work with other churches or public spaces in your community, to set apart a half a day to retreat together, set your intention for the retreat but be gracious with yourselves and others that retreat is not about accomplishment.



Daily acts of retreat. Consider inviting youth to incorporate practices of daily retreat. This could mean going for a walk in nature, abstaining from technology, listening to podcast or sacred and spiritual music. This can be done as a group but just as easily alone. Share about the experiences when you talk about retreat.

Have parents or other adults host dinners to prioritize regular connection within your community. These could be done in small groups of affinity, age, or gender.

Spiritual retreat during transitional years and events. You can plan retreats for upcoming youth or before they transition to high school. Have confirmation retreats or retreats for graduating seniors. Make it a habit to mark these milestones with a retreat. Consider places known for their retreat patterns.



Where can I learn more?

Books

The God-Hungry Imagination: The Art of Storytelling for Postmodern Youth Ministry by Sarah Arthur. Upper Room, 2007.

Leaving Home with Faith by Elizabeth F. Caldwell. The Pilgrim Press, 2002.

Mission Tripping: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry Missions by Danny Kwon. The Youth Cartel, 2017.

Imaginative Prayer for Youth Ministry: A Guide to Transforming Your Students' Spiritual Lives into Journey, Adventure and Encounter by Jeannie Oestreicher and Larry Warner. Zondervan, 2006.

Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids by Kara Powell and Chap Clark. Zondervan Publishing, 2011.

Sticky Faith Service Guide: Moving Students from Mission Trips to Missional Living and Sticky Faith Service Guide, Student Journal: How Serving Others Changes You by Kara E. Powell and Brad M. Griffin. Zondervan, 2016.

The Way We Pray: Celebrating Spirit from Around the World by Maggie Oman Shannon. Conari Press, 2001.

Prayer for People Who Can't Sit Still by William Tenny-Brittian. Chalice Press, 2005.

Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus by Mark Yaconelli. Zondervan, 2006.

Curriculum

[Echo the Story](#). SparkHouse.

[Facing Racism: In Search of the Beloved Community](#). Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Mission Agency, 1998.

[Different Ways to Pray](#) by Nancy Ferguson. The Thoughtful Christian, 2010.

[Spiritual Disciplines for Teens](#) by Nancy Ferguson. The Thoughtful Christian, 2012.

[Journey](#) by Aaron Foster and Pete Stearns. The Youth Cartel.

[Serving from the Heart for Youth: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service](#) by Yvonne Gentile. Abingdon Press, 2007.

[God's World, Our Home: A Peacemaking Resource for Youth](#). Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Mission Agency, 2004.



[Lord, Make Me: Following St. Francis](#) by Lisa Nichols Hickman. The Thoughtful Christian, 2008.

[Prayer](#). (Faith Questions Series). Congregational Ministries Publishing, 2011.

[Serving Others: Possibilities for Volunteering](#) by Ellie Roscher. The Thoughtful Christian, 2011.

[Viva! Practices](#). The Youth Cartel.

[Viva! Rest](#). The Youth Cartel.

[Seeing Jesus: Social Justice Activities for Today Based on Matthew 25](#) by Phyllis Vos Wezeman. The Pastoral Center.

[Word Teasers: Faith Edition](#). Big Ideas in Youth Ministry.

Online Resources

["24 Volunteer Ideas for Teens."](#) The YMCA.

["The Danger of a Single Story."](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. TED Global, 2009.

["Anti-Racism Resources."](#) Forming Faithful Families. First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater, OK.

["Awakening a Sense of Mission in our Children."](#) *Presbyterians Today*, June/July 2018.

[d365 devotions](#). Passport, Inc. Co-Sponsored by the Office of Christian Formation, PC(USA).

["Customer Service Matters: 5 Ways to Create Hospitality in Youth Ministry."](#) By Theresa Mazza. Group Youth Ministry.

["Mission and Advocacy."](#) Presbyterian Youth Workers Association.

["Mission and Social Justice Resources."](#) Office of Christian Formation, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[Retreats: Why do them?](#) by Andrew Noe. Youth Ministries Conversations.

["Prayer and Spirituality Resources."](#) Office of Christian Formation, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

["Social Justice."](#) Presbyterian Youth Workers Association.

[Souper Bowl of Caring](#).

[The Way](#). IMDb, 2010.

[Won't You be My Neighbor](#). Focus Features, 2018.