

Ministry Resources for Community Life: **An Overview**

Ministry Resources for Community Life offers faith communities program resources and strategies to build community among young people and throughout the entire parish. The resource contains nine gathered sessions to help young people get to know one another, themselves, and the meaning of Christian community. It also contains an outline for an ecumenical event to help build community across denominational lines, and it offers practical strategies and ideas to help manage community issues, make the most of community life opportunities, and encourage intergenerational and family relationships.

Manual Contents: An Overview

Part A: Community Is Essential to Youth Ministry

Chapter 1 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* explores the importance of creating Christian community among youth and adults within the parish and the youth ministry program. It highlights the importance of creating an atmosphere in which youth are welcomed and an attitude of acceptance, as well as the importance of intergenerational relationships and the essential role the parish community plays in passing on faith.

Part B: Community Life Sessions

The community life sessions include opportunities for young people to learn more about themselves and other participants and to explore the Scriptures and our faith Tradition for images of Christian community. The sessions in this manual are about 60 minutes in length and sometimes include 15- to 30-minute session extensions. The sessions are not sequential, so you may organize them in the way that is most appropriate for your situation.

Each session begins with a brief overview, a list of expected outcomes, and background reading that may include a list of scriptural connections and *Catholic Youth Bible* article connections. All articles are excerpted from the first edition of the *CYB*. The next element is a suggested schedule, which is to be used as a starting point and modified according to your

circumstances. A checklist of the preparation required, including all materials needed, is the next part of the presentation of every session. A complete description of the session procedure is then provided, including all activities, session extensions, prayer experiences, and options and actions.

Study It

Each session can be expanded and customized to meet your schedule and the needs of your group. You may expand the sessions by using additional activities known as session extensions. Musical selections from *Spirit & Song* are provided for your reference as well. A Bible concordance will provide additional citations if you want to add a more substantial scriptural component to a session, and music resources are available from a variety of publishers. Some of the sessions provide a list of media resources—such as print, video, and Internet—for more exploration. Family approaches provide simple, follow-up suggestions for family learning, enrichment, celebration, prayer, and service.

Pray It: Prayer Experiences

Each session includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer focused on the session's theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayer by young people, reflective reading, and experiences created by the participants. The Pray It component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. The time frame for prayer experiences varies from 5 to 20 minutes.

Live It: Options and Actions

This manual can be a springboard for connections with other youth ministry experiences. Therefore most of its sessions include additional strategies to support the learning process. Those activities can be used to extend the session, provide good follow-up for the Study It core sessions, and allow for age-appropriate assimilation of the material.

Session Overviews

Chapter 2: Let's Get Started

- This session can be used at the beginning of a program year, at the start of a retreat, in preparation for a mission trip, or at any other time and place where helping people to know and trust one another is important. It is designed for participants who do not know one another, although it can be easily adapted for use with groups who are more familiar.

Chapter 3: Who Am I?

- In this session the participants are invited to use their gifts and talents to contribute positively to the communities in which they are involved, including their school, their local community, their parish, and the Church as a whole.

Chapter 4: The Importance of Community

- This session invites the participants to examine the importance of Christian community and the ways they are called to establish and participate in community.

Chapter 5: Making Friends

- This session helps young people take a closer look at the friends they have, the friends they are seeking, and the type of friend they wish to be.

Chapter 6: Music and Me

- In this session the participants experience different styles of music and recognize that music can help to celebrate the differences among people.

Chapter 7: All Are Welcome

- This session helps the participants recognize the need to include others and to be welcoming and open to everyone who participates in youth ministry programs.

Chapter 8: Trust

- This session is designed for groups that know each other but that may not currently be sharing at a deep level. The participants will be encouraged to think about the ways in which trust enhances relationships.

Chapter 9: Catholic and American

- In this session the participants look at the responsibilities of being Catholic and American, and how the Church challenges us to participate in our local community to make it a better place to live.

Chapter 10: The Changing Face of Friendship

- This session is intended for juniors and seniors in high school, to help them deal with the changes in friendships that may occur as they leave high school and move into college, the military, or a job setting.

Part C: Sharing Our Faith: An Ecumenical Event

Chapter 11 provides the framework for creating a 4-hour event to help young people of different faiths work together on service projects, express their belief in God creatively, and learn more about the different faith traditions. This event can be done as an ecumenical event, with young people from Christian faith traditions or from other faith traditions.

Part D: Community-Building Strategies

The strategies in part D of this manual offer parish leaders an opportunity to learn more about some of the components of community life within parishes. Many of these strategies will serve as excellent resources for youth ministry leaders to read and discuss. Parish leaders can examine their pro-

grams and events to look for ways to make the parish more youth friendly. Parents will benefit from lists of ideas for enhancing parent and teen relationships at home. Each strategy contains information to help leaders grow in their understanding of the issue, followed by practical strategies that can be implemented within the parish.

Strategies Overview

Chapter 12: Creating Community

- The essay included in this chapter provides an overview of the steps needed to develop community among all the participants of a youth ministry program or event. This chapter also provides an outline for leaders to follow when planning for and developing community-building events. You will also find a checklist to use when selecting community-building activities from other sources, as well as some simple guidelines for leading community-building activities.

Chapter 13: Seasonal Suggestions for Community Building

- This chapter contains a list of strategies and opportunities that can be used to create various youth ministry or parish initiatives. Program ideas and strategies for providing nongathered community building are included as well. These ideas help parishes celebrate the community that is already present and build community in new ways. In addition, they challenge participants to greater involvement in the wider local community.

Chapter 14: Connecting Youth and the Parish

- In this chapter you will find ways that leaders can be attentive to integrating youth within parish life and welcoming youth to parish events. Ideas for sponsored events to help the generations know each other better are included.

Chapter 15: Peer Mentors for New Members:

Guardian Angel Program (GAP)

- The Guardian Angel Program (GAP) encourages ninth-grade youth to participate in the parish youth ministry program. GAP provides an opportunity for welcome and outreach to those who are just starting high school, and supports their participation in a high-school-level youth ministry program.

Chapter 16: Promoting Positive Behavior in Community

- The strategies listed here assist youth ministry leaders in creating healthy groups and ensuring the safety—physical, spiritual, and emotional—of the young people in their care. To use these strategies successfully, all adults who work in the youth ministry program need to have a common understanding of the ways in which positive behavior can be promoted.

Chapter 17: Making the Most of Extended Events

- This chapter explores the ways in which retreats, mission trips, overnight service programs, and other extended-day events provide excellent opportunities for community building.

Chapter 18: Atmosphere, Attitude, and Actions

- Parishes can be attentive to community issues in countless ways. From setting up rooms to publicity to the use of music, simple details can make a big difference in the life of a community. These strategies will help any parish develop their own sense of community.

Chapter 19: Helping Families Connect

- This chapter addresses the common difficulties parents and their teenagers may face in communicating or spending quality time together, and offers hope that family ties can be enhanced and lived out in the adolescent years. It also contains specific ideas for things that families can do at home to strengthen family ties.