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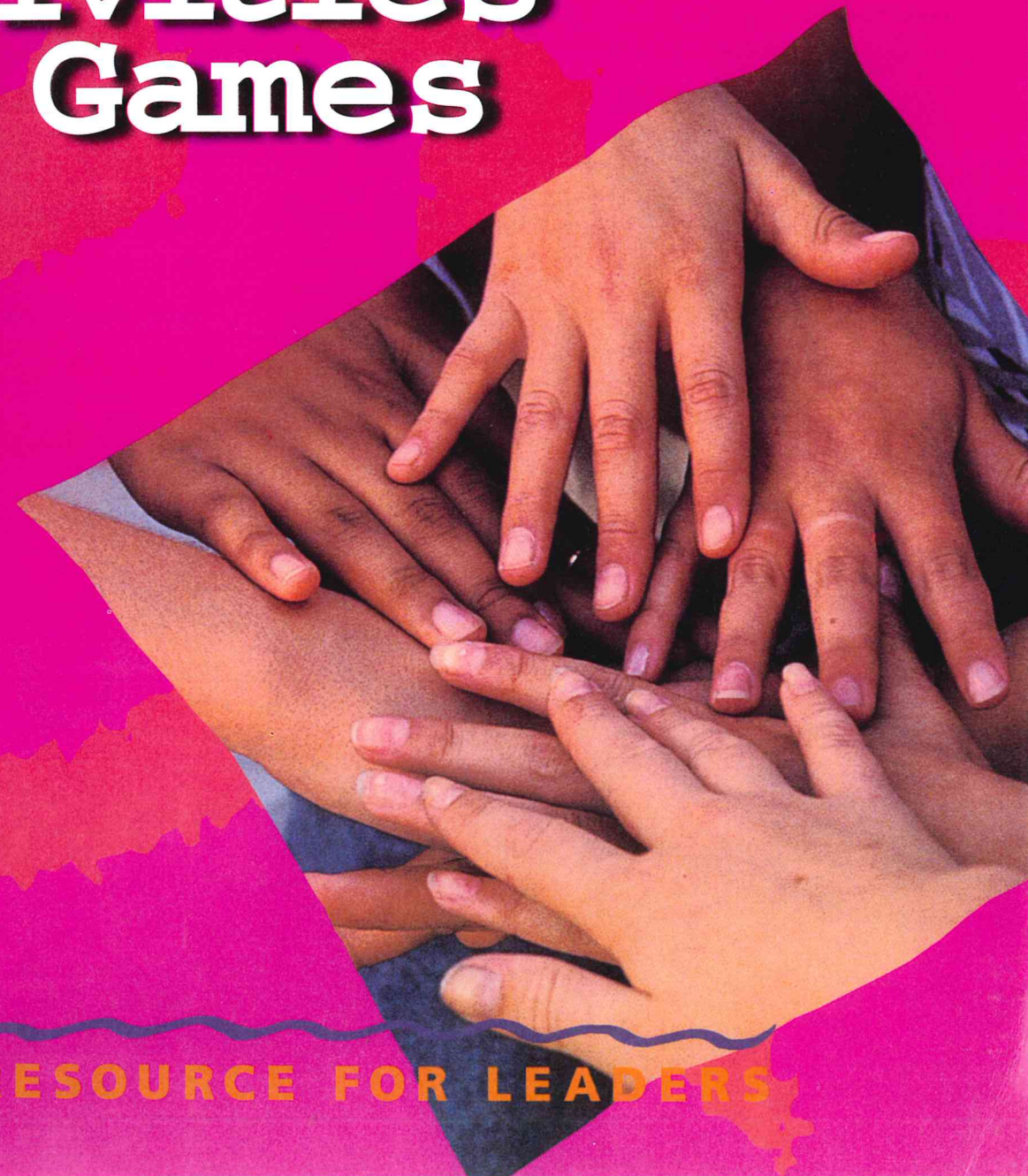
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Community- Building Activities and Games



CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION

A RESOURCE FOR LEADERS

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creative  confirmation

Community- Building Activities and Games

by Julie Henriksen Bowe
Robin Currie
Margaret Marcander

Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis

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activities key



remembering (R)



seeking (S)



wandering (W)



hoping (H)

Creative Confirmation Series
Community-Building Activities and Games

Writers: Julie Henriksen Bowe (Community-Building Games); Robin Currie (Mentoring Conversations, Mentoring Activities, Mentoring Projects); Margaret Marcrauder (Community-Building Activities).

Editors: Randi Sundet Griner, Rich Gordon
Designer: Connie Helgeson-Moen
Cover Photographers: Myrleen Ferguson Cate/PhotoEdit (front); CLEO/PhotoEdit (back)

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Introduction

CREATIVE CONFIRMATION


Welcome to the Creative Confirmation Series. This series invites you to customize a confirmation program that meets the needs of your youth and your congregation. These flexible confirmation resources work together through active and experiential learning activities to emphasize basic Bible literacy, the Small Catechism, worship, and daily life in the Christian community.

LEADER RESOURCES

Nine resource books are provided for pastors and leaders. *Bible 1, Bible 2, Bible 3,* and *Small Catechism* serve as the core of the program. The other five leader resources—*Worship, Community-Building Activities and Games, Sharing the Language of Faith, Mission/Service Projects,* and *Parent Conversations*—help you build a comprehensive confirmation program by providing related activities that nurture faith development in a community setting. The sessions are designed for a group of up to 12 middle school youth.

LEARNER RESOURCES

Study Bible: The New Student Bible NRSV (Augsburg Fortress code 30-10-999) and *A Contemporary Translation of Luther's Small Catechism: Study Edition* (Augsburg Fortress code 15-5305) are the primary student resources for Creative Confirmation sessions. In some sessions a reproducible page from the leader resource is used. The *Youth Journal* guides learner reflection on many of the sessions in *Bible 1, Bible 2, Bible 3, Small Catechism, Worship,*

and *Sharing the Language of Faith*. In session plans, look for the  symbol and page number that point to a *Youth Journal* activity.

About Community-Building Activities and Games ♦

Community-Building Activities and Games is one of the leader resources for Creative Confirmation. The activities in this resource affirm the individuality of each participant and promote relationship building and group building. These activities also build connections between youth and the congregation, the community, and the world. This resource will help youth and their leaders:

- ♦ get acquainted and feel comfortable with others in the group;
- ♦ experience community by active involvement in games and activities;
- ♦ appreciate their identity as a valued member of the body of Christ.

USING THIS RESOURCE

Most of the many sessions in this book are designed to last about 20 minutes. Within a single learning period, churches can group more than one Bible session or combine a single Bible session with activities from this and other resource books.

If you are responsible for the entire class time, matching the symbol included in each session will guide you in selecting activities from the other resource books. (See key on contents/credits page.) If an activity does not have a symbol, it can be used in any session.

The activities in this resource affirm the individuality of each participant and promote relationship building and group building.

Community-building activities

Baptism banners

FOCUS

To instill in the participants a sense of their individual calling into the community of faith.



BACKGROUND This banner-making activity can be used to review the study of Baptism, the Second Article of the Creed, or any study reflecting the themes of birth and beginnings, encounters or introductions. The banners may be designated for the participants themselves as a reminder of their own entrance into the faith community. The participants may want to make banners to present to newly baptized members of the congregation. This activity is designed to keep the participants focused on the concept of community by having them work as partners rather than individually.

MATERIALS NEEDED

12" x 16" piece of burlap, felt, or other suitable fabric (1 per participant)
14" dowel (1 per participant)
Yarn, ribbon, or cord for hanging
Fabric glue

Assorted pieces of felt, fabric, ribbon, yarn, and other materials for creating the banners. Buttons, sequins, beads, and similar items can be wonderful creative additions. Feel free to use your imagination when selecting materials to use.

Paper for making patterns
Scissors

WARM-UP Begin by reviewing some of the symbols commonly associated with Baptism and the significance of Baptism in the life of each person such as a shell, a dove, water, a butterfly, or a candle.

ACTIVITY Have the participants work as partners to create banners reflecting these ideas. Set out the materials you have collected. Ask the partners to design a banner together. They may want to use one of the symbols you

have discussed or they may create one of their own. Use paper to make the necessary patterns before cutting into fabric.

Allow about six or seven minutes for planning and design. Explain that although each set of partners has designed only one banner, they will actually make two, one for each person. Encourage the partners to work together in order to complete the banners in the time allowed. For instance, one person might be cutting out the symbols while the other is gluing them in place.

When the banner is complete, turn over the top edge of the banner and glue along the edge. Insert a dowel and use yarn or ribbon to make a hanger. Purchased fringe and tassels may be added.

RESPONSE What happens to a person in Baptism? How do you think Baptism might change how a person thinks or acts? Why do you think it is important to be a part of a church (faith community)? What does your Baptism mean for you in your life?

Community-building activities

Advent family fun

FOCUS

To give participants an opportunity to prepare and share some devotional activities with their families.



BACKGROUND This activity is designated for use in Advent but may be adapted for use in creating Lenten devotional activities. It will encourage learners to work effectively in small groups and expand their understanding of community. Faith is not something practiced only on Sunday mornings or during church activities. It is part of the life of the baptized person—at home, at school, and with family and friends.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Writing paper
Pens
Construction paper
Scissors
Glue
Paper punch

Binder rings
Bibles

Check your church library or Sunday school resource room for books or materials that may be helpful in providing suggestions for activities and arts and crafts. Books of family devotions that include games, activities, and songs are available, and would be excellent resources for your learners.

WARM-UP Divide the learners into groups of three or four. To encourage participation by all the group members, assign each person a specific task. Assign tasks that will be most effective for your particular learners, like: reader; note-taker; writer; cut-and-paster; timekeeper.

ACTIVITY Assign each group one of the Bible texts used during the Advent liturgies. Ask them to read the text and prepare a short devotion for use by a family in preparing for Advent. Print the following list on a chalkboard or sheet of paper. Explain that these are simply starter ideas and the groups may feel free to adapt them in any way they like.

Opening Prayer
Bible Reading—litany, responsive reading, drama
Song(s)
Art or craft activity
Puzzle or game
Closing Prayer

Ask each group to plan a devotion and write it neatly on writing paper. Then add directions and drawings (if needed) for the activities. Suggested activities might include: Advent wreaths; ornament-making; Jesse trees; murals; and nativity scenes. Reproduce the devotion pages so each learner may make a booklet. Glue the sheets to colored construction paper and assemble in booklet form. Punch holes on the left side and use rings to keep the pages together. Invite the learners to take these home and use them in their family devotion time.

RESPONSE Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas. How will you get ready for Christmas? Why is it important to live your faith in the world as well as within the faith community? What makes it so difficult? Why is family support necessary?

Community-building activities

Passion story quilt

FOCUS

To tell the story of salvation through the events of Holy Week as found in Matthew 26–28; Mark 14–16; Luke 22–24; John 18–20.



BACKGROUND Learners will review the events of Holy Week and deepen their understanding of salvation as the sacrificial gift of a willing and obedient Jesus, the Christ in this activity. Making the quilt encourages community-building through planning and executing the story blocks as partners. (Option: Use two sessions, one for planning and pattern-making and the second for the construction of the quilt.)

MATERIALS NEEDED Gather the items for quilt activity option 1 or option 2 before meeting with your group.

Option 1:

Assorted pieces of cotton fabric
Fabric paints
Scissors (plain and pinking)
Thread or fabric glue
Large piece of burlap or cotton fabric for background
Cotton batting
Yarn

Option 2:

Colored and white construction paper
Scissors
Markers
Glue
Roll paper or chart paper

WARM-UP Use the Passion story texts relating the events of Holy Week. Divide the learners into partners or groups of three or four. Give each group one part of the story and ask them to illustrate the idea using a simple picture or symbols on a 12" square of scratch paper. This will be the design for the quilt square. Encourage the learners to illustrate their stories in simple, straightforward ways.

ACTIVITY Copy the design onto 12" squares of fabric or construction paper, depending upon which option you have chosen. If using fabric, participants may cut figures from fabric and glue them on the background or use fabric paints to make the picture. For the paper quilt, figures may be cut from colored construction paper or drawn with markers.

Invite a parent or another member of your congregation to assemble the story picture squares into a quilt. Use some squares of plain colors of fabric or paper interspersed with the story squares. For a paper quilt, arrange the squares and glue them into place on a large paper background, or by overlapping them and gluing the edges. For a cloth quilt, sew the squares together. Place cotton batting between the quilt top and burlap backing. Quilting may be done with stitches (done either by machine or by hand) or by tying off with yarn at regular intervals. Complete the quilt by stitching around the outside edges. Display the quilt in the narthex or in a fellowship area of your church.

RESPONSE Why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer and die? Why is it so difficult for us to admit we are sinners? What can we do to help others in this world who are without hope?

Community-building activities

New life sculptures

FOCUS

Discover, appreciate and illustrate how life is changed by the resurrection of Jesus.



BACKGROUND Sadly, many members of the faith community do not see their lives as changed because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. But to Martin Luther this was a significant part of the faith experience, and this is also central to the Easter gospel. Each day, he said, one must drown the old Adam and commit to a new life through the working of the Holy Spirit. This activity helps the participants explore what this new life means to them per-

sonally. The activity is designed to encourage trust and reliance in the community while planning and constructing the sculptures *without speaking*.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper towel tubes
Small boxes
Small plastic lids
Foam food trays
Other similar materials
Tape
Scissors
Bibles

WARM-UP Begin by pointing out some of the attributes of both the old self and the new self listed by Paul in Galatians 5:16-26. You may also use other appropriate texts or look up words such as *sin* and *forgiveness* in concordances to find other references.

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into small groups. Point out the variety of materials you have supplied and ask the groups to construct sculptures that illustrate this new life. Explain that each group must work without speaking. The groups may send only one member at a time to the supply table, but each group member should go at least once during the activity. Encourage the groups to look for nonverbal ways (no writing) to communicate their ideas and to trust and rely on one another to complete the task.

RESPONSE What messages are we sending the world by the ways we live our lives? How should our lives be different? How can we become more like Jesus? Why do most believers find this so difficult?

Community-building activities

Unity in diversity collage

FOCUS

This activity will help participants to explore and appreciate differences that exist within the faith community.



BACKGROUND We feel safest with people who are like us, and we distrust those who are not. It is as real in the church community as it is in the world.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Several large sheets of poster board
Selection of used magazines
Construction paper
Glue
Scissors
Bibles
Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 before the session.

WARM-UP Ask the participants how they think they can appreciate, accept, and love other members of the faith community, especially those who are different from themselves. Give the participants an opportunity to speak freely. Affirm the fears they may have about people who are different. Ask them to think of ways they might overcome these fears. Acknowledge the realities of racism and prejudice. Invite the participants to actively look for ways to practice "community" by accepting and affirming the diversity of God's people. 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 provide good basis for this discussion.

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into groups of three to five. Give each group a sheet of poster board and a stack of magazines. Ask them to create a collage that reflects the following: God's People—Unity in Diversity. They may use pictures and words from the magazines. Provide glue, scissors, and construction

paper.

Tell the groups to spend the first five minutes discussing what the title means and how they might show this on their posters. Encourage the participation of all group members by explaining that, at the end of the activity, you will randomly select one member of the group to share the ideas on the poster.

While the participants are working, discussion about differences can continue. Allow about 15 minutes for working on the collage and then select one participant from each group to explain the ideas shared on that group's poster. If possible, display in an appropriate area in the church.

RESPONSE What does it mean to be a community? How can we practice God's love toward others? Why is it easy to "follow the crowd" and make fun of others?

Community-building activities

Get acquainted drawings

FOCUS

To help the participants get to know one another.



BACKGROUND This is an appropriate activity for use in one of the first few sessions of a new group of confirmands. Building community is difficult when people fail to really know one another. Encourage community during your sessions by helping participants reveal themselves and open up to one another. Do this by providing an environment where participants feel free to question, to challenge, to doubt, and to reveal their innermost thoughts without fear of reprisal or ridicule.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Large sheet of newsprint
Colored markers

WARM-UP Place the newsprint in the center of a table. Have the participants gather around it so everyone can reach a portion of the paper. If your group is large, divide the participants

into two groups. Ask them to use markers to write their names in the space near them and to make a character to represent themselves. Then ask them to write adjectives that best describe themselves.

ACTIVITY When everyone has completed their drawings and descriptions, have the participants pair off and ask the partners to spend a few minutes getting to know one another, based on the drawings. Then ask each partner to introduce the other one to the group, briefly sharing some of the personal information given.

To visualize your community here, ask several participants to draw a circle to include each person's drawing. Label your drawings with an appropriate title and place on display in your meeting area.

RESPONSE What makes people unique? Why is it important to respect and appreciate our differences? How do you choose friends? What qualities are important? If there is time, look up and read together 1 Peter 2:9-10. How does this passage relate to the activities and discussion in this session?

Community-building activities

Sidewalk symbols

FOCUS

To explore some of the symbols of faith.

BACKGROUND This activity might serve as an excellent review of the specific parts of the worship liturgy. A sidewalk or patio area around the church would be an excellent place to share the participants' efforts with the entire community. If going outside is impossible, the same activity may be adapted for use indoors by taping large sheets of newsprint or a long paper tablecloth to a floor in the gymnasium, fellowship hall, or hallway in the church building. When complete, these paper murals could be trimmed and displayed on walls. This activity focuses on group planning, decision making, and successfully executing a plan.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Chalk in a variety of colors
Books and resources on commonly used symbols
Paper
Scissors

WARM-UP Have the participants work as partners. Provide paper, scissors, and resource books for the participants to plan and make patterns. Look together at some of the symbols in the books and talk about symbols seen in the church. Talk about what the symbols might mean. Ask the participants to design symbols that might reflect portions of your worship liturgy. Encourage the partners to select and design their symbols together.

ACTIVITY Point out the section of sidewalk you have chosen and ask the partners to use the chalk to draw their symbols. Allow a few minutes at the end of this activity for the partners to share what their symbol means.

RESPONSE Why is worship an important part of a believer's life? How do people worship in everyday life outside the church worship service? How are symbols helpful in our worship?

Community-building activities

Worship helps

FOCUS

To encourage active participation in the worship service and to assist younger children to do the same.

BACKGROUND Children and young people often feel that the worship service is mostly for adults. Many adult members feel the same way. But the faith community consists of a great diversity of ages, and all should be made to feel part of the worship. Use this activity to begin to include them.

Worship helps are a variety of worship-related materials that can be compiled by confirmation participants and used by younger members of the congregation. This activity can be used at any or all times of the church year. It may be

very effective during one church season such as Advent or Easter, or during the summer months. Consider using this as an ongoing service project where participants sign up to compile worship helps at a predetermined time once a month (or, if you are very ambitious, once a week!).

MATERIALS NEEDED

Construction paper
Scissors
5" x 7" manila envelopes
Crayons
Pencils
Writing paper
Graph paper
Church bulletins for the coming Sunday

WARM-UP Begin by determining how many worship kits you might need to make and for which age groups. Each kit is made up of a manila envelope that includes: one pencil, several crayons, the Sunday bulletin, a sheet or two of paper, hymn markers for use in the worship book, and any additional worship helps you choose.

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into several groups. One group will be responsible for making and decorating the hymn markers for the kits. If there are four hymns, each kit will have four markers in it numbered 1-4 and labeled "hymn marker."

The second group will mark the Sunday bulletins. They should number the hymns, use markers to highlight the reading of the lessons, and highlight the special prayers or other appropriate places in the bulletin where the children can participate in an active way.

A third group should prepare one game (a word-find on graph paper, for instance) or an activity appropriate to one of the Bible readings for the day. They may also wish to make a simple drawing for the children to color.

Adjust these tasks to the number of participants you have, how many groups are needed, and the number of kits you are preparing. When completed, invite participants to distribute these kits to children before the worship services for the Sunday you selected.

RESPONSE How does worship help me in my daily life? Why do we go to church? What is significant about the various parts of the Lutheran liturgy?

Community-building activities

Jigsaw story

FOCUS

To tell the story of Jesus in a creative drama where each group tells a part of the story.



BACKGROUND An effective storytelling tool is to jigsaw the story. In other words, each part of the story is told by a different person or group, and the pieces are put together like a jigsaw puzzle. Encourage the participants to actively participate in the learning experience by using this simple storytelling method to study the story of Jesus as a review of the Second Article of the Creed.

PREPARATION Have available copies of Luther's Small Catechism and Bibles. Optional items include appropriate props, simple costumes, and a video camera and someone to tape the skits.

Begin by dividing the story of Jesus into several main topics. Use the Second Article of the Creed as a basis for your selections. For instance—the birth story, Jesus as a boy, his ministry, events of Holy Week, his death and resurrection. Adapt the number of topics to fit the size of your group. Write each one on a slip of paper and place in a basket.

WARM-UP Divide the participants into groups of three or four or have them work as partners. Have the participants select a topic by drawing a slip of paper from the basket. Ask them to prepare to tell their portion of the story in a visual way. They might tell it as a skit, using puppets, in pantomime, or as a choral or dramatic reading. Encourage creativity.

Because of the time allotted for the activity, explain that they should make it a simple presentation that includes only the most important parts of the story as suggested by the Second Article of the Creed. If you like, limit the story selections to the birth of Jesus. Allow no more than seven minutes for this warm-up.

ACTIVITY Present the story or stories. If possible, videotape the presentations or present this jigsaw story during a Sunday school open-

ing or other appropriate place.

RESPONSE What is the most important part of the story of Jesus? What significance does it have for your life? Why do you think God chose to save us in this way?

Community-building activities

Holy Week frame drama

FOCUS

To understand the events leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus in light of the world as it is today.



BACKGROUND Often the events in the Bible seem far removed from life today. For instance, can you put yourself in Noah's place, or Abraham's, or do you assume they had qualities of faith you do not? This activity is designed to help the participants place these biblical events into their own life experiences in order to appreciate the struggles of real people dealing with these events as they happened.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles
Camera, if desired

WARM-UP Divide your participants into groups of three or four. Give each group one event from Holy Week—Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, the Arrest in the Garden, Peter's Denial, the Crucifixion. Invite them to plan a frame drama presentation of the event as it actually happened. Explain that frame dramas are like a series of still photographs or slides. Participants arrange themselves in a way that illustrates a segment of an event. Facial expressions and body positioning are important to creating the drama of the scene. They should set up a picture while the rest of the participants have their eyes closed. The audience opens their eyes to view the scene, then shuts them again while the next scene is set. Each group should plan on using four to six frames to tell their story.

ACTIVITY When the frame dramas are complete, present them to the participants. Perhaps time in the next week's session could be used for these presentations if there is limited time at present.

If you like, snap pictures of the frame drama presentations as a permanent reminder. Display the pictures on a bulletin board during Lent.

RESPONSE How might the story have changed if it happened today? Would the story have the same outcome? Who would be the people in the story—the Pharisees, the disciples, the crowds who shouted "Hosanna" on Sunday and "Crucify Him" on Friday?

Community-building activities

A Passover seder

FOCUS

To understand the relationship between the Old Testament Passover with the Sacrament of Holy Communion instituted by Jesus.



PREPARATION If you wish, enlist the help of some parents in the planning, the food preparation, and to set up the tables and plates ahead of time. This would be an excellent inter-generational event, an opportunity to include the parents and congregational leaders.

Gather these items and set them up prior to the session (These are plans for 12 guests—adjust them according to your needs.):

Matzoh (at least 12 pieces)
6 boiled and peeled eggs
12 small slices of roasted lamb
4 apples
Apple paste (see below)
Salt water
Parsley
Horseradish
Wine
12 paper plates
24 plastic cups
12 plastic forks

Recipe for the apple paste:

4 cups chopped apples
½ cup chopped nuts
¾ cup raisins
½ teaspoon cinnamon

Mix together. Serves 12 (approximately ⅓ cup each).

Before the session, mix the apple paste and roast the lamb. Set tables with white tablecloths and napkins. Set enough plates, cups, and forks for the number of people participating. Set one additional place setting without food. This is the place set for Elijah. Reproduce the Opening and Closing Prayer if you would like everyone to participate.

Because the word *seder* in Hebrew means "a set order," each plate is set in a particular way. Begin at the 11 o'clock position on the plate and place the following foods in clockwise order: a piece of matzoh, half of a boiled egg, a small amount of parsley, a dab of horseradish, a quarter of an apple, ⅓ cup apple paste, and a small piece of lamb. One cup contains a small amount of salt water, and the other some wine.

BACKGROUND This activity requires some planning, and will take longer than 20 minutes, but can be a rewarding experience for the participants. The Passover seder was a beautiful remembrance of God's rescue of the Israelite people from Egypt. The symbols used also pointed to the ultimate rescue of God's people from sin and eternal separation from God. Jesus used this Passover seder as an opportunity to reveal this good news.

ACTIVITY Seat everyone around a table. If you need to use more than one table, arrange them so everyone faces one another. Conduct your meal with this simple format.

1. Open with prayer: "Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe. In love you gave us this festival season, this day of the feast of unleavened bread, the time of our freedom, a memorial to the exodus from Egypt. Blessed are you, O Lord."

2. Say, "There are three cakes of unleavened bread stacked one upon the other on the Passover table. The middle loaf is removed and then broken." Ask everyone to break their matzoh and eat half of it. Say, "The Israelites ate unleavened bread to remember their hurried flight from Egypt, but we recall how Jesus, who is called the Bread of Life, broke bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you.'"

3. Ask everyone to dip the parsley into the horseradish and taste. Say, "This is a reminder of the bitterness of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt. We, too, remember our own slavery to sin."

4. Say, "It was customary for the master of the house to dip a piece of bread, or sop, into the bitter herbs and pass it to someone at the table. Jesus used this to identify Judas as his betrayer." Ask everyone to dip the other half of their matzoh in the parsley and horseradish and taste.

5. Dip the egg into the cup of salt water and eat. Say, "The eggs represent eyes and the salt water the tears shed from those eyes during the Israelites' slavery."

6. Eat the apple and the apple paste. Say, "The apple is a reminder of the bricks the Israelites were forced to make and the apple paste is the mortar."

7. Eat the piece of lamb. Say, "This was God's command, that the Israelites were to sacrifice a pure, unblemished lamb. As John said of Jesus, 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'"

8. Drink the wine. Say, "The blood of the lamb was placed on the doorposts, and the Lord delivered them. We, too, were delivered from slavery to sin by the blood of Jesus. As Jesus said, 'Take and drink, this is my blood shed for you.'"

9. Point out the empty place at the table. Say, "This chair is for Elijah, for it was prophesied in Malachi that Elijah must come before Christ. Before the end of the seder, the youngest member of the family goes to the door and flings it open. Everyone stares to see if Elijah will appear. Sadly, the door is closed when he does not appear. Today we know that the prophet came in the person of John the Baptist to announce the coming of Jesus."

10. Conclude your seder with these words: "It is our duty to thank, praise, glorify, and adore our God who brought us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to great joy, from darkness to great light. Alleluia! Praise the Lord."

11. Say, "The Israelites ended the seder by shaking each other's hands and saying, 'Now we celebrate here. Next year we celebrate in Jerusalem.' We say, 'Jesus is coming soon.'" Have everyone exchange handshakes with these words.

RESPONSE What is the darkness? What is the light? How does the seder relate to the Lord's Supper?

Community-building activities

Storytelling

FOCUS

To re-create the story of Easter in the historic oral tradition of storytelling.



BACKGROUND For the earliest recordings of events in history, people relied on the stories told from one generation to the next. Oral tradition has almost faded from our modern world because written storytelling has taken its place. This activity is designed to give the participants an experience of oral storytelling that may be enjoyable for everyone! Build community by encouraging participants to help one another.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Small bell, tambourine, or similar object
Bibles, if desired

WARM-UP Gather the participants in a circle and explain that the activity for this session is to re-create the events of Easter by storytelling. You might share some thoughts on how some of the stories in the Bible might have been preserved for a long time through the telling of stories from one generation to the next before they were actually written down.

Ask, "How might telling stories in this way have affected their accuracy? Do you think stories passed on in this way could still be true?"

ACTIVITY Begin the story by saying, "When we last saw Jesus, he was hanging on a cross. Many disciples were shocked. Their Messiah was dead!" As you finish speaking, ring the bell and invite a volunteer in the circle to continue the story. After the person shares several sentences, ring the bell. This is the signal that another volunteer should continue the story. Ring the bell after several sentences. Continue until the Easter story has been told.

It is important in this activity that participants are given the opportunity to volunteer. Do not simply go around the circle. It may happen that some participants will not volunteer to speak. That's okay. They will be hearing the story—perhaps for the first time! The idea is to build a

sense of community in telling the story, and it should not be seen as competitive or threatening. Just enjoy the storytelling. Encourage participants to help one another.

RESPONSE How could storytelling be used to share the stories of God's love in our world today? What favorite Bible story could you tell to a group of preschoolers? Why would it be a good witness tool? What stories of God's work in *your* lives could be shared?

Community-building activities

Scenes from the petitions

FOCUS

To demonstrate and interpret the petitions of the Lord's Prayer as they apply to the faith community today.



BACKGROUND This activity will take longer than 20 minutes, especially for large groups. Role play is an effective way to give participants an opportunity to interpret biblical ideas and concepts in our own lives. The church is often reluctant to hear the doubts and questions of its young people, but it is important to allow them to challenge and question and use these experiences to reach a faith that is truly their own. Providing a safe environment to explore these ideas helps young people recognize the church as a place where they can express themselves freely and be heard, respected, loved, and forgiven!

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of Luther's Small Catechism
Bibles
Props as desired

WARM-UP Invite your participants to work as partners. Give each set of partners one or two of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, including the introduction and doxology. Ask them to take the petition, the meaning, and explanation by Luther, then create a modern scene that deals with that particular idea. Invite creativity

and exploration.

Don't panic if someone wants to deal with the "Our Father" issue. Instead of debating gender, ask the participants how they might visualize God. Ask the participants if we can limit God by the names we use. Perhaps they can show how God is bigger than our own understanding of male and female issues. Allow about 10 minutes for planning.

ACTIVITY In the final 10 minutes (or more if you have several groups), partners can share their role play scenes with the group. Do the presentations in order.

RESPONSE If God provides daily bread, why are there poor and starving people? How should we live if we are living in the kingdom of God right now? How might you explain the difference between God's care for the world, and control of it?

Community-building activities

God is like . . .

FOCUS

To help illustrate some of the qualities of God as revealed in the actions of people of faith.



BACKGROUND This activity is designed to help focus on the activities of God's people as they live a ministry of faith in their daily lives. It can be used effectively during the Pentecost season, or in order to review a study of the Ten Commandments. It may be helpful to point out the Bible texts, such as Ephesians 4–6, or Galatians 5–6, dealing with life in the Spirit and to discuss them briefly. Talk about how these scriptures illustrate life in the Spirit.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Chalkboard or large sheet of newsprint
Chalk or colored markers
Bibles
Blank cassette tape
Tape player

WARM-UP Read some of the Bible texts, or brainstorm together to discover those actions of God's people that reveal what God is like to the people around them. List them on a chalkboard or sheet of newsprint.

ACTIVITY After 10 minutes or so, ask each participant to select one action from the board that reveals a truth about God. Have the participants continue to select until each person has chosen one. Then ask each participant to think about how to describe that action in one or two sentences. For instance, someone selects the word *servant*. The participant might say: "God is like . . . a person who helps a neighbor carry in groceries without expecting a reward. God is like . . . a person who willingly helps with chores around the house."

Give everyone a few minutes to think about what they might say. Encourage the participants to help one another. Then start the cassette tape and record an oral presentation of "God is like . . ." by having the participants take turns saying their sentences aloud.

RESPONSE Why should we be aware of our actions as we live in the world? What difference does it make? What message are we giving?

Community-building activities

Choral readings

FOCUS

To share God's word with others in the faith community.

BACKGROUND As participants explore their faith and the importance of worshiping together with the community of believers, it is helpful to find ways to specifically include them in the worship service. This activity is designed to be planned and practiced during the 20 minutes of class time, but actually used during a worship service. It can be done as a review of any Bible text, portion of the Catechism, or with any theme related to worship.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Writing paper
Pens or pencils
Bibles
Copies of *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)*

WARM-UP Begin by deciding which Sundays will be used for this activity. Divide the participants into groups of two to four. Give each group several copies of *LBW*. Have Bibles, paper, and pencils available for each group. Turn to the listing of the readings for each Sunday in the front of the hymnal.

If you have not yet done so, briefly discuss how these are used during the service. Explain that the scriptures read in worship follow lectionary cycles. A lectionary is a collection of scripture passages intended for use as readings during worship. Assign each group one of the selected Sundays. Ask them to look up each of the assigned readings for the Sunday in their Bibles and read them as a group.

ACTIVITY Invite volunteers to choose a task, or assign tasks to each group member—one or two readers, one or two notetakers, a time-keeper, a project recorder to write the final copy, a proofreader. Adjust these to fit the size of the group and the needs of your participants.

Explain that the task is to read the selected texts, select one to use as a choral reading, and then prepare it for use in the chosen worship service. To create a choral reading, the chosen text can be divided into sentences to be read antiphonally (two groups reading every other sentence or phrase responsively) by a group of participants. You can point out the psalms found in the *LBW* and how they are often read in the service. Encourage the participants to be creative.

Ask the groups to write out the final version of the choral reading. Reproduce these for the entire group. In the sessions just prior to the service where they will be used, practice them together as a group.

RESPONSE Why is it important to study God's word? How does it really apply to the things that happen to us, to the questions we have in our own lives?

Community-building activities

One-on-one interviews

FOCUS

To help participants become part of a community by trusting one another with personal information.

BACKGROUND This activity is meant to develop feelings of belonging, friendship, and value in your participants. Young people need to see the church community as a place where they truly belong—where they are accepted, cherished, and respected as people of God. This is an opportunity to let young people know that they are valued members of the body of Christ, with valid and significant contributions to make to the faith community.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Chalkboard or large sheet of newsprint
Chalk or colored marker
Paper
Pencils or pens

Prepare and photocopy an interview sheet that includes a list of questions that will help the participants discover more information about one other. Participants will add interview questions of their own to this list. Possible questions to include:

What is your favorite food? Least favorite?
Who lives in your home?
What is your favorite hobby?
What is your favorite subject in school?
Do you have a nickname that you like?

WARM-UP Tell the participants that they are to be journalists in this activity. Begin the planning process by asking, "How do we get to know one another? What makes people friends? What things do we need to know about one another to feel like we belong?"

Divide the participants into pairs in such a way that those who may be most unfamiliar with one another are partners. Distribute the interview sheets and work as partners to add more questions. Encourage them to find ways to discover who the other person really is. Ask

the partners to interview each other. When everyone has completed their interviews, ask the participants to introduce their partner to the rest of the group.

ACTIVITY Help the participants visualize belonging to a community by taking pictures of each participant and placing the interview sheet on a bulletin board beneath the photograph. Label it "Our Confirmation Community" or a similar appropriate title.

RESPONSE How do we hurt the gospel message when we practice prejudice and make judgments about who can belong? How can we share the gospel in our friendships?

Community-building activities

Prayer pretzels

FOCUS

To help visualize the concept of confession and forgiveness.



BACKGROUND Long ago, dating back as far as the fifth to seventh centuries, the pretzel was a reminder of prayer and the need for repentance. Some people say that the early monks wanted to find uses for leftover bread dough. Because fasting was an important part of the Lenten observance, a simple dough was formed into the shape of crossed arms and sold on the streets to remind people of their need to confess their sins. The monks used to cross their arms when they prayed.

Some monks discovered that their young students learned their prayers more quickly if they were "bribed" with the specially shaped bread called *bracellae*, which means "little arms." The Germans called them *pretzels* from the Latin *pretiola*, meaning "little rewards." This activity will connect participants with this story and remind them of their need for confession and forgiveness.

MATERIALS NEEDED Plan for more than 20 minutes for this activity. Gather these ingre-

dients and supplies for this activity:

1 package dry yeast
1½ cups warm water
1 tablespoon sugar
4 cups flour
1 egg (beaten)
Toppings such as coarse (sea) salt, poppy seeds, caraway seeds, sesame seeds
Margarine or shortening
Large mixing bowl
Mixing spoon
2 or 3 knives
Several brown grocery bags
Cookie sheets
Pastry brush

You may prepare the dough ahead of time or do it together if your group is small. If you mix it together during the session, give the directions and let the participants add the ingredients and do the mixing.

Place water in mixing bowl and dissolve yeast in water with the sugar and salt. Blend the flour in slowly and stir to form a soft ball. Turn onto a floured piece of brown paper (cut from a grocery bag) and knead until smooth. Flatten gently into a rectangle about ½ inch thick.

ACTIVITY Cut a strip of dough for each participant and roll it on a piece of floured brown paper. Twist the strip into the pretzel shape and place it on a cookie sheet that has been lined with greased brown paper. Brush the pretzel with egg and sprinkle with the coarse salt. Bake in a preheated oven at 425 degrees for 12-15 minutes. Makes several dozen pretzels. Let cool before eating.

RESPONSE Why is confession important? Why do some people fast? What might be the benefits? Why is forgiving such a desirable attribute?

Community-building activities

Back to back

FOCUS

To develop in the participants an appreciation for the unique and individual characteristics of each person in the community.



BACKGROUND Although this activity may seem simplistic, it has an important function in developing self-esteem. Many young people have a difficult time with self-image and feelings of inadequacy at this point in their lives. The goal of this activity is to create in each person a sense of confidence and assurance as a unique individual, created by God, to be just as they are.

PREPARATION Place two chairs back to back prior to the session.

ACTIVITY Select two participants randomly and ask them to sit in the chairs, back to back. Ask one participant to describe the other as specifically and completely as possible. Remind participants that all God's creations were good, and therefore all descriptions are given in the most positive and kindly way. When the first participant has finished, invite the second participant to describe the first. Select two more participants randomly and have them describe one another. Continue until everyone has participated—including yourself.

Spend a few minutes discussing how important each of us is to God and to the community of faith. Each of us has been created just as God intended, and we are loved because we are God's creation. Our unique qualities give us a special place within that community.

RESPONSE What can you do when others are making fun of someone? Why are humans so easily led into making judgments about others just because of the way they look? How can you change it, and why?

Community-building games

"Hi, my name is (beep, beep) Hank"

FOCUS

Use the following game to help a new group of participants learn names or to help an established group warm up before a session.



BACKGROUND Sometimes acting silly in a setting where everyone is acting just as silly as you are can help break down walls between people and foster an opportunity for more serious sharing of ideas and opinions down the road. This game is designed to help participants get past self-conscious feelings and fears in order that they may begin to express their true selves to the group.

PREPARATION Read the directions and become familiar with the game before the session begins.

ACTIVITY Ask the participants to spend a few minutes thinking of an action (such as winking, saluting, or doing a jumping jack) and a sound effect (such as a whistle, grunt, shout, or sneeze). When each participant has thought of an action and sound effect for himself or herself, ask the group to stand in a circle.

Now tell the participants that they are going to take turns introducing themselves to the group. But before one says his or her name, that one does his or her action and sound effect simultaneously. For example, "Hi, my name is . . . (followed by action and sound effect) . . . Hank." Everyone else in the group responds with, "Hi, Hank!"

Here's the tricky part. Let's say the next person in the circle is Jane. When Jane introduces herself she will say, "Hi, my name is . . ." now she will do Hank's action and sound effect followed by her action and sound effect before saying, ". . . Jane." Everyone responds, "Hi, Jane!" and the game continues.

Each new person to introduce himself or her-

self must first do everyone else's action and sound effect thus far, and then his or her own. The last person in the circle will do everyone's action and sound effect, including his or her own. Everyone will soon catch on to the importance of paying attention to what each person is doing. If time permits, conclude the game with all the participants simultaneously doing everyone's action and sound effect from start to finish. Conclude with a big round of applause.

RESPONSE How did it feel to act silly in front of this group? What made it hard or easy to act this way?

Community-building games

Musical squares

FOCUS

This game will help new or established groups learn more about each other's backgrounds and beliefs.



BACKGROUND This game will work best with a large group (10 or more participants). Fearing that one may express feelings that are not acceptable to the group can cause some young people to remain silent, or appear bored, or act inappropriately in order to divert attention from an uncomfortable situation. Sharing personal information through a game can often allow people to focus less on their fears and more on the play that is going on around them. As a result, everyone is invited to become part of the process and hopefully freed to share a bit more about themselves than they normally would.

PREPARATION Prepare for this game prior to the session by making several cardboard squares. Cut apart cardboard boxes and lay them flat. Keep some pieces fairly small (about 2' x 2') and tape other pieces together to form larger cardboard squares that could accommodate groups of three to six participants. Place the cardboard pieces evenly over a designated playing area.

Arrange for taped or live background music for use in this game.

ACTIVITY Invite the participants to wander among the squares while the music is playing. Tell them that when the music stops, they must quickly get onto one of the squares. Any number of people can be on a square as long as there is always more than one person on any given square, and as long as everyone has both feet touching the cardboard. It is not necessary to have people on all available squares.

Once everyone is situated, ask each small group to share information or discuss a question with one another as you direct. When it appears everyone has shared the information you requested, start the music again and ask everyone to begin wandering again. When the music stops they should again scramble for a footing on a square.

Use one of the following statements for each round in the game or think of your own:

- Tell the other people on your square what you ate for breakfast this morning;
- Tell one other person the title of your favorite movie and why you like it;
- Tell about a time you were scared and what you did about your fear;
- Play a game of "rock, paper, scissors" with one or two people on your square;
- Tell one other person something you like about your church;
- Find out how many people on your square think abortion should be legal and how many think it should be illegal (stress that we want to listen to different viewpoints here, not argue opinions).

While the music is playing, you may want to change the playing field a bit by removing or combining squares. Also, if the participants do not know each other very well, be sure to have them introduce themselves to one another before they begin sharing the information that you request.

RESPONSE What was it like to share information with other members of this group? Were there any surprises for you during the game?

Community-building games

Matchmaker

FOCUS

This game will help participants discuss what it means to be part of a family and how that relates to Baptism.



BACKGROUND A top priority of many young people is to be part of a group. Finding ways to remind young people that God has chosen them, through Baptism, to be part of this family can be a powerful assurance that they always have a place to fit in.

PREPARATION Cut 8" x 11" tag board into puzzle pieces. Make enough puzzles of different colors for small groups of four or five, depending upon your group size. There should be one puzzle piece for each participant. On each puzzle piece write one or more words from Mark 16:16a: *The one who believes and is baptized will be saved.*

Each small puzzle should have the entire passage written on it. Hide the puzzle pieces around the meeting room.

ACTIVITY When all of the participants have arrived, ask them each to find one hidden puzzle piece (participants should be able to find all of them in 1-2 minutes).

As each participant finds a piece of the puzzle, he or she should link it with one other person's piece of the same color. Tell them not to worry yet about the words that are printed on the puzzle pieces.

When everyone has found a partner ask them to sit down together. (If there is an uneven number of participants have three participants form one of the small groups.) Ask each pair to think of a time that he or she was lost and then found. (*I lost my parents at the mall, I got lost in the woods.*) Ask everyone to share their experiences with their partners.

When all have finished, ask them to share with their partners how it felt to be found (relieved, thankful).

Now ask the participants to come together with their puzzle pieces and invite them to find the others who have pieces to complete their

puzzle.

When the puzzles are complete, ask the participants to share their ideas of how being a puzzle piece is like being part of a family.

RESPONSE Now ask the participants to read aloud the Bible verse written on the puzzle. Ask who it is that brings us together through Baptism (*God*). Why do they think God does that? How is being part of God's family like a puzzle? How do you feel knowing you are part of God's family?

Ask each participant to take his or her puzzle piece out of the puzzle. Invite them to take their puzzle pieces home and keep them as a reminder that God chose each of them to be part of God's family, the church.

Community-building games

Spiritual fruits

FOCUS

This game will help participants distinguish between "fruits of the flesh" and "fruits of the Spirit" and discuss the impact both have on their lives.



BACKGROUND In Galatians 5:16-26 are noted a number of traits one can expect to see in people who follow the ways of the world versus those who follow the way of Christ. Reflecting on the way people often react to certain traits in others may help participants determine what traits they want to claim as theirs in their own lives.

PREPARATION Cut strips of paper large enough to make headbands. Before the group gathers together, prepare a paper headband for each participant. Write the following "fruits" on the headbands:

Greedy: Accuse me of taking more than my share;

Fighter: Pick a fight with me (verbally);

Burn Out: Treat me like I'm looking for trouble;

Kind: Be nice to me;

Lovable: Give me hugs and praise;

Joyful: Laugh and smile at everything I say;

Generous: Ask me for things.

ACTIVITY Put a headband on each participant but do not allow anyone to see what his or her own headband says. Invite the participants to mingle and greet others based upon what their headbands say. After a few minutes, ask the group to discuss a particular topic of interest (such as a news item or today's confirmation lesson), while still responding to each other based on the headbands.

After about five minutes, end the discussion and ask the group to listen while you read Galatians 5:19-21 to them. When you finish, ask if anyone experienced any of the "fruits" Paul was talking about during this game. As the participants tell how they felt during the game, have them check their headbands to see if their feelings match the traits they were assigned.

RESPONSE How did you react to the way people were treating you? What can this game teach us about the impact traits can have on our lives?

Community-building games

Temptation traverse

FOCUS

This game will help participants visualize how, in the midst of temptation, Christ stands ready to take them by the hand.



BACKGROUND When temptation strikes, one's Christian faith can seem miles away. But the truth of the matter is that Christ is as close as ever when one faces tough choices in life. Christ knows the voice of temptation. Christ walked through temptation's wilderness himself. And Christ stands in that wilderness yet today, ready to lead each of us through its thorns and snares.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Several bandanas

ACTIVITY This game will work best with five or more participants. If your group is smaller, invite one or two parents or other youth to participate in this game. Also consider participating yourself. Begin by asking the group to name a number of temptations people sometimes face (*cheating, stealing, gambling*). When they are finished, ask all but two of the participants to scatter themselves throughout a designated area. Explain that they represent temptations, just like the ones mentioned earlier.

Ask one of the two participants who is not representing a temptation to go and stand in the midst of those who are. Tell the group that he or she represents Christ.

Now use a bandana to cover the eyes of the participant who has not been assigned a role. Explain to the group that he or she will represent each of us as we try to face temptation without giving in to it. This participant will attempt to find Christ in the midst of temptation.

The participant who cannot see should begin to walk slowly through the game area. As he or she approaches other participants, they should say, "Here I am! I can make you famous! Follow me!" (Or I can make you rich, or popular, or powerful.) If he or she thinks it is the voice of temptation, he or she should walk in another direction until someone else says, "Here I am. Come to me." (This participant is Christ.) When he or she hears the voice of the one who is representing Christ, he or she should reach out, take Christ's hand and remove the bandana.

If time permits, give other participants a chance to play the roles of Christ and the wandering person.

RESPONSE What did it feel like to play the different roles in the game? In what ways is this game like real life?

Community-building games

Seek and find

FOCUS

In this game participants will help each other search for and find one who is suffering.



BACKGROUND As Christians, we are called to help those who are in need. But sometimes when the need of one is great, or when the needs of many begin to overwhelm, it is easier to throw up one's hands and say, "I am not capable of facing all this hurt!" than it is to seek a solution to the problem. God's solution is the church. Through our faith and combined love, God's people can face the needs of this world.

MATERIALS NEEDED

One bandana for each participant

ACTIVITY This game will work with three or more participants. Spend a few minutes talking with the participants about the suffering they see in the world. Encourage each participant to share an example of suffering. Ask them how they feel when they see or hear about suffering (*sad, confused, helpless*).

Tell the participants that they are going to play a game in which they will have a chance to help someone who is suffering. Ask for a volunteer to play the part of a suffering person. Ask this person to go off a fair distance from the rest of the group and lie down on the ground. He or she should lie motionless and remain quiet.

Ask the rest of the participants to cover their eyes with bandanas and turn around a few times in order to disorient themselves a bit. Now ask them to get on their hands and knees as you point them in the direction of the game area. Tell them that they must keep their eyes covered and that they cannot speak to one another. The participants are to crawl on their hands and knees in search of the suffering person. As leader, be sure to monitor the group closely and redirect participants who may be crawling out of the game area.

When someone finds the suffering person, he or she is to go and bring the other participants to the suffering person. After about 10 min-

utes, or when everyone has found or been brought to the suffering person, end the game. Try to let the participants determine for themselves if everyone has been brought together.

RESPONSE What was it like to search for the suffering person? How does this game reflect our call as God's people? In the game just played, lots of people were brought to the suffering person. When we find someone who is suffering, how can we offer help?

Community-building games

Strut structures

FOCUS

In this game participants will work together to build a symbolic structure.



BACKGROUND Teamwork is an important aspect of most noncompetitive games. By combining ideas, know-how, and creativity, the end result is a game where everyone wins because everyone contributes something to the group.

PREPARATION Make paper "struts" by rolling several layers of newspaper diagonally from one corner to the other to form a tight tube. Then tape the tube to hold it together. When rolled correctly, a strut is quite resilient. Make enough so that each group has 8 to 12 struts. If you have more time than 20 minutes, the participants could roll their own struts.

Have newspaper and lots of tape for this activity.

ACTIVITY Ask the small groups to think about the term "new life" and how it applies to their Christian faith. Through the promise revealed in Jesus' resurrection we are assured of new life in Christ. At Easter time, especially, we celebrate this gift of life through worship and praise. We often use symbols to express the way we experience the joy of the promise. Easter symbols such as butterflies, an open tomb, lilies, and an empty cross are examples.

Divide the participants into groups of three

or four. If your group is already this size, proceed with the directions. Give each small group a bundle of struts you have prepared ahead of time. Explain to the group that the struts can be fastened together with tape to create structures of their choosing.

Ask the participants to spend 10 minutes working in their small groups to construct structures that symbolize "new life." Suggest that they may want to incorporate themselves into their structures in some way. Encourage the use of imagination and creativity as they build their "new life" structures together. It could be abstract or representational. Trust the participants to come up with their own ideas, but remind them that they have just 10 minutes to work.

When the participants have completed their work, ask each small group to share the meaning behind its structure with the rest of the group.

RESPONSE What was the best part of building your structure? What did you discover about yourself, your faith, or others?

Community-building games

Ball toss covenant

FOCUS

This game will help participants share ideas as they work toward creating a group covenant.



BACKGROUND A covenant is a promise. It can be an important starting point to begin new projects with young people. Not only will a covenant help the participants work together in developing guidelines of participation within the group, it will also help hold them accountable to one another as they work toward the completion of a project.

A covenant can be developed for the purpose of clarifying expectations for group conduct that everyone agrees to follow for the good of the group. (For example, "Take turns speaking." "No put-downs." "It's okay to disagree.") Or a covenant may be the starting point for plan-

ning a group service project. (For example, deciding a service project to work on together, and setting an obtainable goal to complete during the year. See the Mission/Service Projects book for information along these lines.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Volleyball or kickball
Newsprint or chalkboard
Marker or chalk

ACTIVITY This game is a way to brainstorm together in a nonthreatening and active way about a covenant. Ask the participants to stand in a circle. Give one participant a ball (or begin with the ball yourself) and explain that the person who holds the ball is invited to share ideas or questions that he or she has pertaining to the covenant topic. When the person holding the ball is finished speaking, he or she throws the ball to another person in the circle and that person shares questions or makes comments. No one is allowed to speak for more than one minute. As the ball is tossed and participants share ideas, write the ideas on a large piece of newsprint or on a chalkboard.

Continue the ball toss for about 10 minutes or until everyone who wants to share something has had an opportunity. When the session is finished, take time to rewrite the group's ideas in the form of a covenant. Have each participant sign it.

You may want to try using the ball toss as part of other discussions about other topics.

RESPONSE Did this game help you share your thoughts? Why is it important to hear everyone's opinions in this group?

Community-building games

Get from the pit

FOCUS

In this game participants will cooperate as they attempt to stand up in unison.



BACKGROUND Cooperative games that involve physical strength can sometimes be an emotional and physical risk for many young people. Participants who do not feel comfortable with their bodies or who have physical disabilities can experience feelings of failure as the game begins. As leader, it is important for you to assess the skill levels of your group members and make adjustments to the game as needed with compassion and care. Group participation and cooperation is the main goal.

ACTIVITY Ask the participants to choose partners and sit back to back on the floor. Tell the partners to imagine that they are stuck in a deep pit. The walls of the pit are too smooth and too high to climb alone. The only way to get out of the pit will be to work together. In order to do this, ask the partners to link arms and "walk" up the sides of the pit (stand up in unison).

After all of the partners have managed to stand up in unison, ask each pair to join with another pair. (If there are fewer than eight participants in your group, have them try this portion of the game in groups of three, four, or as a whole group.)

Now ask the groups of four to sit in a circle with their backs to each other. Again, they are trapped in a pit. The pit is too wide for them to get out in pairs. The whole group will have to climb the walls in unison by linking arms and standing up together.

Finally, bring the whole group together and ask them to sit in a circle facing out. Using the same technique as before, ask them to "climb out" of the pit.

RESPONSE How does this game build community? Why is it good to build community?

Community-building games

If all the body were a foot . . .

FOCUS

In this game participants will work together to complete a task using only their feet and ingenuity.



BACKGROUND 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 reminds us of the importance of variety in God's kingdom. As members of the body of Christ, we all have important contributions to make. Each of us is unique, and together we are able to serve the many needs of one another. As leader, it is important for you to assess the skill levels of your group members and make adjustments to the game as needed.

PREPARATION Read the directions below and make arrangements accordingly in your learning space.

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into groups of two or three and ask them to stand next to each other and join hands. Tell each small group that they will need to try to complete a task without letting go of each other's hands or using their hands to help in any way. Also, they may not speak to each other. For some tasks, consider asking the participants to close their eyes. In other words, the only part of their bodies that they can use are their feet (or feet and eyes).

Assign each small group a series of tasks such as: 1. Open a door; 2. Go into the room; 3. Find a box; 4. Open the box; 5. Bring the object inside the box back to the room; OR: 1. Go under one table and over another; 2. Do it again backwards; OR: 1. Open a backpack; 2. Take out the paper and pencils; 3. Write your names.

Be sure to match the difficulty of a task to the skill levels of the members of each small group. If you have participants who have difficulty walking, or are unable to walk, think of ways to adapt the tasks so that they, too, can

participate. As with any game that mixes movement with limitations, be sure to monitor the groups closely so that no one is injured.

After about 10 minutes or when the groups have completed their tasks, bring the small groups back together. If time permits, ask the whole group to try to complete a task together.

RESPONSE What made this game most difficult and why? What does this game tell us about the importance of a variety of gifts in people?

Community-building games

Feed the snake

FOCUS

In this game participants will laugh, run, cheer, and cooperate.



BACKGROUND Here is a game to try when you need to pump up the energy level of your group (and get a chuckle for yourself). Physically challenged people can help feed the snake if they have the use of their arms. A wheelchair-bound participant might be the head of the snake. Make adjustments to this game as needed to include all group members.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A flying disc

ACTIVITY This game will work best with 10 or more participants. Gather the group together in a large playing area, preferably outside. Tell them that they have just entered the Garden of Eden. In the garden live a snake, Adam and/or Eve, and a cherub who guards the place (that's you). Ask all but one of the participants to line up single file, and ask each to put his or her hands on the shoulders of the person in front of him or her. Tell these participants they are the snake. Whenever they move, they must not break apart.

The one participant who is left will be Adam or Eve. It is his or her job to feed the snake. Give Adam or Eve the flying disc. Tell the group

that it is snake food.

At this point the snake should run out into the middle of the playing area. At your signal, Adam or Eve should throw the flying disc. The snake must run to the disc and the first person in line picks it up. He or she then passes it between his or her legs to the next person in line, who does likewise until it is passed all the way down the line. The last person in line takes the flying disc and runs with it to the head of the line.

While all of that is going on, you, as cherub, are commanding Adam or Eve to perform a task such as: run to the wall and back; do 20 jumping jacks; recite one of the Ten Commandments; and so forth.

If Adam or Eve completes the task before the snake can finish its meal, he or she becomes the new head of the snake and the last person in the snake becomes the new Adam or Eve. But if Adam or Eve does not complete the task, he or she must feed the snake again. Play the game for about 15 minutes.

RESPONSE How did cooperation play a role in this game?

Community-building games

Sowing seeds

FOCUS

This game will offer an introduction to a discussion of Jesus' parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9).



BACKGROUND Using Jesus' style of teaching as our guide, we teach experientially. Rocks, walks, water, stories, and seeds all become tools for teaching about our Christian faith. Just as Jesus led his disciples by way of fishing boats and wedding feasts, we too can call upon our surroundings to help bring scripture to life.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible
Peanuts in the shell

ACTIVITY Ask the participants to sit on the ground in a circle. Ask one participant to stand in the center and read Matthew 13:1-9. When he or she is finished reading, tell the group that the center person represents one of the things in the parable that kept the seed from being sown (a bird, rocky soil, or thorns). The participants in the circle represent those who sow the seeds.

Ask the participants in the circle to each cup their left hand and hold it out next to the person sitting on their left. Place a peanut (in the shell) in *one* of the participants' cupped hands. Now tell all of the participants that they should move their right hands from their cupped hand to the cupped hand of the person sitting on their right. They should all do this in unison, using a rhythmic and continuous motion.

As they move their hands back and forth, they should also be moving the peanut around the circle from cupped hand to cupped hand. To help with the rhythm of their moving hands they may want to chant, "Sow the seed, sow the seed . . .".

The center person should close his or her eyes for a few moments as the peanut begins to be moved around the circle. Then the center person may open his or her eyes and try to detect where the peanut is. When he or she thinks he or she knows who is holding the peanut, he or she points at that person and everyone stops the motion. If the center person is right, he or she switches places with the person pointed at. If he or she was wrong, the game continues.

Variations: For larger groups, try putting three people in the center at one time (a bird, a rock, and a thorn) along with two or three peanuts circulating. For groups with fewer than six participants, have them sit in a circle with their backs toward the center. They may pass the peanut behind their backs. The one who guesses where the peanut is should stand outside the circle.

RESPONSE What are some things in daily life that keep the seed from being sown?

Community-building games

Lump of clay

FOCUS

In this game participants will play the roles of model, sculptor, and clay as they re-create each other.



BACKGROUND Good touch is an important part of group building. Sometimes a quick hug or a pat on the back can say more than a thousand words. Finding ways to help youth experience good uplifting touch as part of your group time will help foster a healthy sense of friendship and bonding.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Several bandanas

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into groups of three. If your group is this size already, proceed with the directions. Ask each small group to choose one person to be a sculptor, one person to be a model, and one person to be a lump of clay. Give each sculptor a bandana and ask each one to cover his or her eyes with it.

Ask each of the models to strike an interesting pose. Those who are lumps of clay should crouch down. Each sculptor should touch his or her model in order to determine the model's pose. The sculptor then tries to re-create the model's pose by positioning the person who represents the lump of clay. The sculptor can go back and forth between model and clay as often as necessary to complete the re-creation.

When the sculptor feels his or her masterpiece is complete, he or she may remove the bandana. Ask the participants to notice subtle differences between the model and their recreations. If time permits, the participants may want to switch roles so they all have a chance to play the part of model, sculptor, and clay.

Variation: If you like, the sculptor could also not be able to speak.

RESPONSE How did you feel during the game? How does this game relate to God's creation of each of us?

Community-building games

Block party

FOCUS

In this game, participants will work together to re-create an object they have not seen.

BACKGROUND Working together with other people on a simple task can be a challenge in itself. If you add to that task stipulations like, "Nobody may speak," or, "Nobody may see," one's first reaction may be, "This is impossible!" Challenging ourselves to look past our limitations and focus on our strengths can reveal creativity and cooperation.

PREPARATION For this game you will need interlocking blocks and a towel. Before the session, build an object out of interlocking toy blocks and hide it under a towel in your meeting area.

ACTIVITY When the participants arrive, allow each one 10 seconds to reach under the towel and touch the object without looking at it.

When everyone has had a turn, divide the participants into teams of 2-4. Give each team a number of interlocking blocks. Tell the teams that they have five minutes to re-create the object under the towel. When time is up, let the teams see the original object and compare their work to it.

If time permits, you may want to continue the game using a new creation and this variation: Allow only one member of each team to see the object and then inform the other members of his or her team what to build without speaking to them.

RESPONSE What made this game hard? Easy? How well did your team work together?

Community-building games

The hat game

FOCUS

In this game participants will discover that helping each other makes the game much easier.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Hats (one for each participant)

A rope (long enough for each participant to hold on to while sitting in a row)

A few good friends.

Do these sound like the ingredients for a game to you? Probably not. But add the all-important word *cooperation* to the mix, and the possibilities are endless.

ACTIVITY Ask the participants to sit side by side in a row on the ground. Unwind a long piece of rope and ask each participant to hold on to the rope with both hands. Then place a hat in front of each participant (you may want to arrange with the participants ahead of time to bring their own hats). When everything is ready, tell the participants that they are to put their hats on without letting go of the rope and without using their hands in any way.

Refrain from giving the participants any other instructions or hints at this point. Simply allow them to struggle with the task and attempt to discover a solution. In time, they will hopefully discover that the best way to go about putting on their hats is by using their feet to put a hat on another participant's head and vice versa. If, after 10 minutes, they have not discovered this on their own, you may give them a hint.

RESPONSE How did you feel at the beginning of the game? At the end? What was the most important ingredient in the game?

Community-building games

Group hopping game

FOCUS

In this game participants will work together to hop from one location to another.

BACKGROUND If hopping sounds like an easy task to you, you haven't tried hopping on one foot in unison with a row of other hoppers. The trick is that you have each other to depend upon for support in meeting the challenge.

PREPARATION Read the directions prior to session time. No extra materials are needed for this game.

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into groups of about five and have each group form a single line. Now ask each participant (not including the first one in each line) to extend his or her left leg forward so that the person in front of him or her can hold on to it at the ankle. Each participant also places his or her right hand on the shoulder of the person in front of him or her. Supporting one another in this position, the group must work together to hop from one designated point to another. In order to avoid competition between groups, time the game and see how quickly all of the groups can get from one point to another.

RESPONSE At what point did it become obvious that you would have to cooperate to complete the task? What were some key discoveries that helped you along the way?

Community-building games

ESP

FOCUS

In this game participants will be challenged to communicate with each other creatively.

BACKGROUND Communication is a key element in building community. Expressing one's opinions in a group discussion, speaking one's preference when group choices need to be made, and talking with other members of the group in ways that are uplifting are all important elements to be learned by your participants. Activities that focus on communication may help participants see the importance of good communication throughout your time together.

MATERIALS NEEDED

One bandana for each group

Balloons

String

ACTIVITY Ask the participants to form groups of two or three. In each group, designate one participant as the "nonseer," and give that person a bandana to cover his or her eyes. The other one or two participants in each group cannot speak.

Secretly tell the nonspeakers that they must get the nonseers to: 1. Blow up a balloon; 2. Tie a string to it, and; 3. Tie the string to a designated object, such as a doorknob or a tree branch.

Tell *all* of the participants that the "nonspeakers" in each group must get the "nonseers" to complete a task. Also, the nonspeakers may not physically assist the nonseers in completing the task.

After about 10 minutes or when the tasks have been completed, end the game and let the partners or trios express their thoughts about the game to one another.

If time permits, have the participants switch roles and begin again with a new task that you assign.

RESPONSE Invite the participants to tell how they communicated with their partners. What worked? What didn't work? Why is good

communication important when you are part of a group?

Community-building games

String art

FOCUS

In this game the participants will work together, without seeing, to create shapes with a rope.

BACKGROUND Games designed to challenge a group to work together also provide a good arena for experiencing community within the group. As members of the group work together, it is important to be aware of, and talk about, how leadership is handled. Ask what leadership styles seem most effective. Ask what kinds of contributions those who are followers make to the group.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A lightweight rope (two feet in length per participant)

ACTIVITY Invite the group to sit in a circle on the ground. Give each participant a bandana and ask each one to cover his or her eyes with it so he or she cannot see. Ask each participant to hold on to a single piece of rope as you unwind it around the inside of the circle. Tie the loose ends together.

Now tell the participants that you want them to work together to form different shapes with the rope. They must keep their hands on the rope at all times. To begin with, ask the participants to form a perfect square with the rope.

While the participants work, note *how* they work together toward completion of the task. Is everyone part of the action? Do some participants dominate the process? Keep these observations in mind for discussion during "Response."

When the participants agree that they have formed a perfect square they may remove their bandanas and look at their work. It is important that the participants determine for themselves when the square is complete, rather than

you telling them.

If time allows, ask the group to create other shapes such as: a perfect triangle, a perfect star, a crescent moon, and so forth.

For a variation when working on any of the shapes, allow the participants to see but do not allow anyone to speak. Take note of how efforts to communicate change as the limitations placed on the participants change.

RESPONSE Ask the groups, "What were some ineffective ways the group worked together? What ways were effective? What feelings did you experience during the game?"

Community-building games

Group charades

FOCUS

In this game small groups of participants will act out words or phrases for the rest of the group.

BACKGROUND Many young people are leery of performing in front of a group. But in a game many of these same young people find a hidden talent for theatrics. Helping youth overcome "stage fright" can help build self-esteem and be an important step in overcoming other obstacles that may be inhibiting them from actively participating in the group.

PREPARATION Cut slips of paper of various colors to place in a hat. Participants will each draw one slip of paper out of the hat, then get into groups with others who draw the same color. Decide how many groups of three to five people you need and cut a corresponding number of slips of colored paper. Place them all in a hat.

ACTIVITY Invite the participants to draw a slip of paper from the hat and get with other participants who drew the same color. If you have fewer than six participants they may work in pairs or individually.

Give each small group a word or a phrase to act out as a charade. (Some possible ideas in-

clude birds hatching from eggs, a storm, an apartment fire, or a word or phrase that relates in some way with your confirmation program.)

Tell the groups they have three minutes to prepare their charades. When time is up, ask the groups to take turns presenting while other groups guess what they are acting out.

If time permits, give each small group another word or phrase with which to work.

RESPONSE What did you like best about this game? Was it hard or easy for you to act in front of this group? Why?

Community-building games

Rat race

FOCUS

In this game participants will work as a team to attain a goal.

BACKGROUND Sometimes serving others means delaying or sacrificing one's personal agenda to help others along the way. In a fast-paced society, that can be a supreme sacrifice for many. Helping young people see the greater good in slowing their pace to help another via this game can help them apply the same principle to their daily lives.

MATERIALS NEEDED

10" strips of cloth

Objects to balance, like a book, sponge, or eraser

ACTIVITY Divide the participants into groups of three. If there are fewer than six participants in your group, have them get in pairs, holding onto hands (instead of "tails" as directions indicate). If there are fewer than four participants, form one group and adapt the following rules as needed.

Tell the small groups that they are families of rats. Give each participant a strip of cloth to tuck into his or her back pocket or tie to a belt loop. This is his or her tail. Each rat must use both hands to hold on to a family member's tail throughout the game.

Tell them that a cat is on to their scent. They will have to race from one designated point to another before the cat arrives. Each rat has a piece of "cheese" it must bring along (an object that can be balanced on a person's head). Since they cannot hold the cheese in their hands, they will have to balance it on their heads.

Begin the race with a signal. If a rat drops his or her piece of cheese another family member must try to retrieve it and replace it on the other rat's head without dropping his or her own cheese. At this point, rats may let go of tails with one hand to retrieve cheese, but they may not use their hands to prevent cheese from falling. If a rat family drops all of its cheese, it must wait for another rat family to come to its rescue and replace their cheese. If the helping rat family drops its cheese in the process, they are frozen and both families must wait for a third rat family to come to their rescue.

The object is for all rats to help each other get to safety together. End the game after about 10 minutes or when all the families have made it to safety.

For variation and more of a challenge, have each rat family circle around as it moves toward the finish line, or have them hop, skip, and so forth.

RESPONSE How did it feel to go back and help another family? How does this game relate to our call as servants in God's family? Refer to the good Samaritan story in Luke 10:25-37.

Community-building games

Group challenge toss

FOCUS

In this game participants will develop skills in concentration and cooperation.

BACKGROUND Challenging youth to concentrate and cooperate is an important part of building community. Whether or not the group succeeds in its endeavor is of less significance than the actual "doing." In working together to

achieve a common goal in this game, your group can grow to be a stronger and more supportive community.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Objects that can be tossed and caught, like a bean bag, a wad of paper covered with tape, or a sponge ball

ACTIVITY Ask the participants to stand in a circle. For groups of 10 or more participants, you may want to divide into two or more smaller groups. Give one participant a tennis ball or a similar object. This participant begins by throwing the ball to another player.

That player throws the ball to another player, and so on until everyone has caught and thrown the ball once. As the game progresses, those who have not had the ball thrown to them should raise hands ready to catch the ball. Tell the participants to remember who they threw the ball to so that they can continue the game using this same pattern. The last participant to catch the ball throws it to the participant who began the game.

Now begin the game again, with participants throwing the balls in the same order as they did during the last round, only this time continue to add balls to the rotation. Give the new balls to the first participant, and remind them to continue throwing the balls in the same order as previously. See how long the participants can keep the balls in the air as more and more are added.

When someone drops a ball or misses a catch, the group should try to compensate without losing complete control of the rhythm. If the rhythm is totally lost, gather up the balls and try again.

A variation of this game that may work well in larger groups involves giving several participants balls to throw. In order to throw a ball to another player one must first shout the name of the person he or she wishes to throw to and that person must shout back the thrower's name before the ball can be thrown. More balls may be added to make this version more challenging.

RESPONSE How did you feel during the game? What helped everyone work together? What were some problems?

Community-building games

Laps-n-backs

FOCUS

In this game, participants will work together to roll a ball along their laps and backs.

BACKGROUND Games that require a prop or two and as few rules as possible tend to spark quick interest and, just as importantly, tend to end at about the same time that the interest levels of the young people do.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Plastic ball
Empty plastic or cardboard half-gallon milk container

ACTIVITY This game will work best with 8 to 10 participants. Ask the participants to sit on the ground in a circle. Each player should have his or her legs pointing toward the center of the circle, and lean back on his or her hands.

As the game is played, participants keep their heels on the ground at all times and they may not touch the ball with their hands. Place a ball on the lap of one participant. Tell the participants that they need to work together to roll the ball around the circle on everyone's laps. If the ball gets trapped, the group should find a way to free it and put it in motion again.

As the group begins to move the ball, you can see how quickly they can get the ball around the circle, or you may want to see how many times they can move it around the circle before it falls from their laps. For a greater challenge, have everyone close their eyes.

After about 10 minutes of moving the ball on their laps, invite the participants to get in a close circle facing each other on their hands and knees. Place a milk container on one participant's back. Have the group try to move it around the circle by using only their backs. Then try moving a ball around on the circle of backs.

RESPONSE What part of this game was most challenging for you? How did the group work together during the game?

Why have mentors?

"Do as I say, don't do as I do."

How often our kids get that message from adults, or think they do. From the time they could walk, we have known more about busy streets and dangerous sticks and the right time for bed. Very early we adults became the authorities and, in general, that is a good thing. Children do not need to be learning about cars by getting hit; they should take our word based on experience. Adults need to be adults, enjoying children for their spontaneity but not allowing children to make decisions they are not ready to handle.

As children grow, they become more independent so that by the time they are ready for junior high, the admonishments to wear boots and a scarf may fall on deaf ears. The "do it because I say so" style of child direction loses its effect, and it should be replaced with attitudes of support and guidance as the child moves toward the teen years and increasing self-reliance.

The learning that junior high students do will look different, but be no less important, than their siblings just a few years younger. Even though preteens question authority (sometimes loudly), they still need to feel the security of strong adults who will guide them and not let them do anything foolish. That shift in role is often difficult for the parents to make. Sometimes better guides through this time are adults outside the family, school teachers, or youth group leaders.

As a part of this Creative Confirmation Series we are introducing the mentor as another adult the participants can relate to in the confirmation years.

Who is a mentor? ♦ The dictionary definition of a mentor is one who is "a wise and loyal adviser." The wisdom of the mentor does not have to come from books but from knowledge of how to get along with others and how Christians respond in faith to the challenges of life. A loyal mentor can be trusted to keep confidences, seeing both sides of an issue. A mentor supports the participant's growth toward independence. As an advisor, the mentor listens first, then suggests alternative perspectives without giving easy solutions.

In some ways a mentor can do some of what godparents did in less mobile communities. Godparents, often siblings of the parents or good friends and neighbors of the family, were responsible for the spiritual upbringing of the child. They often were close confidants to the growing students as the youth faced difficulties with parents, no matter how minor. Godparents had patience when the parents' patience grew short, and they were available by walking down the block or seeing them at church. Now godparents may live many states away, and even if close friends are chosen for their proximity, job changes can separate families in a short time.

Mentors enter the youth's life

in the junior high years when parental patience can be taxed to the limit. They fill that need for the student to have an outside adult friend as they question and experiment with the limits and opportunities of growing up. It is essential that a congregation accepts the challenge of seriously deciding who to invite to be a mentor.

Mentors teach primarily by example and by guidance rather than by lecture or instruction. The participant will be aware of inconsistencies in the mentor's life, perhaps between the Sunday worship and the weekday lifestyle. Part of the mentor's learning may come through exploring his or her own faith and life as it is being shared with the youth. That is one way confirmation mentors differ from basketball coaches. At the center of the mentor/student relationship is the love of God and the desire to serve God in the situations that arise in daily life.

Jesus was a mentor for the twelve disciples. He shared his knowledge (and the disciples did not always understand), but more than that he modeled love and faith and courage. He showed them what a follower of God looked like. For young people a more mature Christian can serve in this role of mentor, as example and friend.

A mentor must enjoy youth and be willing to invest a rare commodity—time. Mentors can be teachers or interested adults, each taking one youth to mentor.

As an advisor,
the mentor
listens first,
then suggests
alternative
perspectives
without
giving easy
solutions.

Parents actually make good mentors—for someone else's kids! Mentors should be at least 30 years old and youth should be mentored by an adult of the same sex.

The age and education of the mentor are far less important than the willingness to share life experiences and the desire to help a youth grow. The adult mentor puts the youth first in their time together, listens without judging or immediate problem solving, and is supportive and caring. The mentor recognizes that junior high youth are undergoing physical and emotional changes that frequently make them loud and active, testing the limits and the patience of all adults. The mentor sets specific boundaries and is firm in keeping them, but is forgiving and willing to continue the relationship with unconditional acceptance of the participant.

Youth are expected to be respectful and willing to learn things that are not found in books, but in life. They must be dependable in keeping appointments and honest in their sharing of feelings about the mentoring experience. They may not start out this way! It may be part of the mentor's job to make these expectations clear, and reinforce them throughout the relationship.

Not all relationships will evolve into lasting friendships. An adult mentor and a youth can still be grateful for the time they shared and the insight they gained into themselves and each other through the experience. Sometimes they will just have a few good times together. Sometimes they will learn to relate with someone they don't particularly like, but who they value as another human being trying to make sense of living as a Christian in a confusing world. The success of mentoring lies in the understanding gained, whatever that understanding is.

Who can use a mentor program? ♦ A congregation wishing to implement a mentor program must plan carefully in

order for the program to work. A task force could review the material in this resource book and talk about ways that mentoring can enrich the confirmation ministry. Plan training sessions for mentors that include information about legalities such as when reporting abuse and other issues is mandatory. Who in your community can be called to offer support and guidance in crisis times? Sharpening listening skills is crucial and needs to be an important part of training connected to relational skills.

In a small congregation, a few adults may easily mentor all of the confirmation youth. This can be done in group activities, but some time should be allowed for one-on-one activities and talks of a personal nature. Many small congregations have adults, from young newlyweds to senior citizens, who would enjoy this kind of special relationship. Another pattern for a small congregation would be to match youth with other youth's parents. This works best if the mentors and youth are doing activities by themselves rather than with the group.

Larger congregations will need to structure the program differently. Each youth can be assigned an adult to visit regularly outside class. Couples can mentor one or several youth. The important thing is the consistency in the relationships. The youth must know the mentor is reliable, will keep commitments, be available at reasonable times and support the youth with prayer. Of course, there are many other reasons why a good mentoring situation is not possible for the entire length of confirmation—people move, jobs demand more or less at different times, and babies are born. Try not to change mentors without explaining clearly to the youth the circumstances and reasons for the change.

Some congregational leaders are skilled at matching youth and adults for mentoring. Many adults who are not well known by the participant may volunteer for such a program and

foster friendships that never would happen otherwise. Other programs allow the youths to choose mentors they already know and admire. The youths are likely to be more committed to the program if they choose their own mentors, but the mentors, of course, must agree to serve and devote the time necessary for building solid relationships with youth, and for training times. A congregation will need to clarify expectations and boundaries for appropriate and inappropriate mentor/youth relationships.

What do mentors do? ♦ Mentoring takes place any time the mentor and youth share a personal experience. Continuity may be built if mentoring group time can occur several times during a year so that ideas from this resource can be shared and feedback can be exchanged. In this Creative Confirmation Series, there are three categories of experiences—conversation topics, activities, and projects.

The amount of time spent mentoring will vary with the activities of the adult and participant, the time of year and other church commitments. Many congregations feel all meetings of unrelated adults and youth should take place in public areas. Church insurance policies will help determine the kinds of activities that are appropriate in your setting. It is important to check your insurance thoroughly for information about required permission procedures and guidelines that are in the interest of safety for all parties regarding trips away from the church building.

Special group meetings for all of the youth and mentors together can include group time as well as time for building relationships between mentoring partners or small groups. Since mentoring is any shared experience, it

can be Saturday breakfast, attending a sporting event, watching a video, taking a bike ride, or meeting at church to do cleaning and repairs.

Once in a while it may be nice to plan a special event just for the mentor and youth, or a small group of mentor and youth partners, such as a day trip to pick apples or attend a concert or play. Congregations may offer ideas and guidelines that are appropriate to the community regarding such events. The only guide is that all people should want to do whatever is planned, that they are all committed to following through on the plans, and that some time is available to talk about whatever is on the minds of the youth, whether that is related to the event or just the needs of the moment.

For instance, individual mentors or youth might spend some time together after a sporting event talking about times in the game when emotions were tense or when someone felt like criticizing. How did you feel about what happened? How might the situation have been better or worse? Are there any parallels to be drawn to the business world? This kind of talk can help the youths see new dimensions to the experience and encourage further discussion with the mentors on other topics.

The mentor/youth relationships may begin at the start of the confirmation years or as the youths enter their last year of study. The mentors can be an active part of the confirmation experience, helping learn verses and concepts and offering personal human insights into understanding the doctrines. At confirmation, the mentors can pray for the youths, helping them select confirmation verses and laying on hands at the confirmation service. After the youths have been

confirmed, the mentors can continue to help the teenagers become an active part of the congregation, encouraging participation in worship and on committees as well as in youth activities.

This unit is divided into three sections: mentoring conversations; mentoring activities; and mentoring projects.

Mentoring conversations begin casually and progress into topics that are deeper and more substantial. Youth and mentors will have differing ideas about many of the questions. Working together to build relationships that are trustworthy will allow for honest sharing in these conversations. Limiting the discussion to 20 minutes will help focus. Leave the option open to bring up the topic again. Small group discussions are fine, but there should be time for individuals to bring up topics with the mentor one-on-one as well.

The participant should be certain of the confidentiality of your conversations. It may happen that information on abuse or dangerous practices are revealed. Some states have laws concerning the level of confidentiality versus the need to protect the potential victim. Your congregation will need to explore this issue and have legal guidelines in place. Then you can communicate to mentors and youth what those guidelines are.

Mentoring activities encourage the mentor and participant to do something together, primarily to get to know each other better or to improve their relationship. The activities suggested can be accomplished in 20 minutes, within the confirmation instruction setting or at another time with a few basic materials or your own creative touches.

The significant difference between a mentoring activity and any Sunday school or vacation

Bible school activity is the conversation that accompanies it. As work progresses, mentors should look for ways to share experiences and encourage youth to look beyond the actual activity to the reason for doing it and the relationship to the rest of life.

Mentoring projects require

more planning and take longer to accomplish. These projects can raise awareness of community and global needs that the mentor and participant can address together. While both the mentor and participant benefit from projects, there is another person or cause they serve together. They

afford the mentor and participant more time to talk and reflect, to plan and work together and get to know each other. Each project is an opportunity for Christian service to people or causes, a chance to review and discuss priorities. Enjoy the journey together!

Mentoring conversations

Getting to know you

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will exchange information about themselves to gain insight into one another and determine areas of common interest.



WARM-UP "Tell me about yourself."

CONVERSATION What is the most challenging part of your job?
What subject are you best at in school? Why?

If you are eating out, what food do you like to order?

What do you like to do on weekends?

What is your most cherished possession?

When have you felt God in your life most strongly?

What has happened in the last few weeks to remind you of God's love and care?

Try not to make this a discussion with one person doing all the asking and the other giving short answers. Asking open-ended questions like, "Why do you prefer dogs to cats?" will encourage longer responses. Both youth and mentor should share information. The more open the mentor can be about expressing preferences and feelings, the more encouraged the participant will be to do so. This activity can be used briefly at each meeting to get caught up.

Mentoring conversations

Forward to the future

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will explore their plans for the future from their different places in life.



WARM-UP "What would you like to be doing 10 years from now?"

CONVERSATION What subjects in school are most interesting to you? Why?

What do you think is the ideal age to get married? Have children? Why?

If you could have a part-time job right now, what would you like to do?

What area of the country would you like to live in? Why?

If you could go anywhere in the world (with money as no object) where would you go?

Do you ever wonder what people of other faiths believe? Which ones would you like to know about?

The mentor can share about points of decision when one choice altered the path of life. Junior high youth may have very unrealistic career goals such as being a rock star or pro football player. It is better to use examples from the mentor's life than to give direct advice to the participant about this topic. "I really wanted to have children right away, but with all that traveling I had to do for work it was just too complicated. Now I believe that I may be a more patient mother because I was older when my children were born."

Mentoring conversations

I can't believe I did that!

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will exchange discussion about some of their mistakes, both humorous and serious.



WARM-UP "What was your most embarrassing moment?"

CONVERSATION Have you ever been really late or really early to something? What happened?

Have you ever thought a couple of hours after something happened, "Why didn't I say . . . ?"

What things have your pet or brother or sister done that have embarrassed you? What did you do?

When were you the most scared of any time in your life?

This can be a topic to really break the ice. Almost all "was my face red" stories have funny elements to them. Remember that few things are funnier to kids than adults who make fools of themselves. The mentor can begin by sharing a story that shows his or her own humanity and ability to make mistakes: "I didn't realize Indianapolis was in a different time zone and I was an hour late for the interview. Things went downhill from there."

Then share some stories with more serious consequences, stories from which painful lessons were learned. Both the mentor and participant may have some of these, and they can be important for understanding one another. They are a way to acknowledge our humanness and lack of control, and put our faith in God to bring good from embarrassing situations and wrong decisions.

Mentoring conversations

All in a day's work

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will share perceptions of employment and the impact it has on the individual and family.



WARM-UP "What kind of job do you think you might enjoy doing?"

CONVERSATION What would you like to do when you have a job? Do you know what kind of training that will take?

Do you think mothers and fathers should both work? If not, how should they decide who stays home?

What good is work if you don't get paid?

What are the toughest decisions a doctor has to make? How about a worker in a nuclear power plant? How about pastors?

Is it ever okay to talk about Jesus when you are at school or work? What if someone tells you to stop?

Is it fair to give a certain job to a minority or woman just because they have been discriminated against in the past?

The mentor will probably have more real-life experience with the workplace: "It was hard to work for a manager who always put down women. I needed the money, but as soon as I found another job, I left." The youth may not have had many relevant work experiences, but they may have opinions on subjects like two-career families from the point of view of one who has been a latchkey kid or missed school events because both parents work. The whole Lutheran understanding of Christian vocation as part of our ministry in the world is important to this conversation.

Mentoring conversations

I'll never forget it!

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will exchange memories of wonderful moments in their lives.



WARM-UP "What's your best memory?"

CONVERSATION Where did you go on your most interesting vacation?

What was your best birthday? How old were you? Why was it so good?

Have you ever met a famous person?

What movie do you remember most clearly?

Have you ever cried at a movie? Have you ever hidden your eyes while watching a movie?

What is the most beautiful worship service you have ever been to? Where was it? What happened?

Wonderful moments happen all the time—it is a miracle to breath in and out! The mentor will want to choose experiences from life that the junior high participant can relate to. For example, as wonderful as the birth of a child is to an adult, the participant may only see it as another sibling to deal with. This is an opportunity to share the "wonderful in the ordinary," the joy of being with good friends, the beauty in a sunset or walking in the snow: "One really wonderful moment was when I slept out under the stars on a camping trip. It was so clear I thought I could see forever." It is also an opening to talk about the wonderful moment of becoming a child of God at Baptism. Most youth won't remember their own Baptism (nor do adults!), but it is a moment to be celebrated.

Mentoring conversations

I thought it would never end

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will explore facing difficult circumstances in life.



WARM-UP "Did you ever have a time when you felt you could not deal with whatever was going on in your life?"

CONVERSATION What was the saddest time in your life?

Have you ever been to a funeral? Whose? What happened? How did you feel?

What is the most frightening time you have ever had? Who was with you?

Have you seen movies or TV shows about things that scare you? How would you feel if some of those things happened to you?

Have you ever felt that God isn't hearing you when you pray?

This topic may disclose surprising things. The mentor will choose an example to share that will be appropriate for the participant to hear; the mentor will express emotions honestly but not to excess. There will be questions about why God allows sad things to happen. They may be answered with the limited understanding that we humans have of God's plan for us all. We see only a part, and there are things we cannot explain. But in all suffering, we know God is with us and will not desert us.

A participant's response to the question of facing a difficult situation may produce a "tragedy" that seems pretty insignificant to the adult. Maybe the greatest crisis of the preteen really is not making the cheerleading squad. That loss and the blow to the self-esteem must be taken seriously, and the emotions that accompany it must be expressed. One tragedy many preteens experience is the death of a pet. Any adult can relate to the sadness of losing "just a dog" and will offer compassion. "Every

time you open the door and the dog is not there to greet you, it is sad all over again, isn't it?"

This topic may open a whole arena of tragedies: starvation, injustice, misuse of resources, and threat of war. Any of these conversations can lead to more talking and hopefully some action. We must all remember that suffering is not God's plan for humans. We are told in Genesis to take care of the world and all that is in it.

As indicated in the article at the beginning of this unit, some states have strict laws about reporting possible physical or sexual abuse. Your congregation should address the steps to take that are compatible with the state's laws, so that youth can grow up safely.

Mentoring conversations

Dream a little dream

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will share dreams that they cherish whether it seems they will come true or not.



WARM-UP "If nothing stood in your way—not your age or schooling and job or money—what would you like to do right now?"

CONVERSATION Where would you like to travel?

If you inherited some money, what would you do first?

If you didn't ever have to work, what would you do with your time?

If you were free to help any people or group, who would you give your time to?

If you could buy one thing for the congregation, what would it be?

This may be a hard topic for the adult who can't imagine life without the constraints of job and home responsibilities, money pressures, and mortgage payments. The participant may be much more creative and suggest things the mentor once dreamed of but lost sight of over the years. The dreams of the participant may

sound shallow and possession-oriented to the mentor, but they are valid dreams and should not be dismissed as trite or unrealistic. Further conversation may get past the immediate gratification dreams.

God's hand is in all we do, and our aspirations and plans are not outside God's will. Our dreams can be evaluated in light of God's design for peace in our lives and justice in the world. Sometimes the dreams youth have of making a difference in the world are abandoned for "reason" and adult reality becomes cynicism. Let the "we can't do that" rule be suspended and dream together. This topic may uncover similarities in interests between participant and mentor that will be the basis for more conversation.

Mentoring conversations

Tithing talents

FOCUS

The mentor and youth will brainstorm ways for both to use their talents to serve the church.



WARM-UP "What skills do you have that you might like to use to help the church?"

CONVERSATION The initial reaction to this question may be "none." Youth often think they have no place in the worship or functioning of the congregation. The mentor can explore the reasons this seems to be so, and perhaps enlighten some church leaders about the message they are sending the youth.

Next, focus with the participant on skills that are used in school or other organizations. Brainstorm ways the church could benefit from the energy and talents of the junior high participant. The mentor may have a long list of "church work" things to do. Talk about whether these things are the work that God has for Christians to do or activities that lead to something greater.

As the projects are discussed, ways to involve youth may be discovered. Discuss why energy

should be spent helping the church rather than getting a second job or helping a community organization.

Mentoring conversations

Changes, changes

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will discuss the changing relationship youth have with parents in the junior high years.

WARM-UP "What changes have you seen in your parents in the last year?"

CONVERSATION Junior high youths will undoubtedly see any difficulties in the relationship between them and their parents as the parents' fault. Parents are too strict or treat them like babies or push too hard for good grades or never have enough time—the list goes on! The wise mentor will need patience to sit through the litany without responding, "But you still need to be told to wear your boots."

Remember that the preteen only sees his or her side. They do not have the perspective of watching numerous 10-year-olds suddenly get an attack of hormones and not behave in a reasonable manner until they reach 15. The mentor knows this is a stage of development, but will refrain from giving any advice unless an opinion is specifically requested. Since it is impossible to know all the factors in the youth's situation, comments should be made on a similar situation from the mentor's life rather than direct advice about the youth's problem.

The mentor/participant relationship is centered in God and God's love as it is lived out in our lives. It will require patience and compassion the adult may not think is possible. It may take all the adult's control to refrain from saying "When I was your age . . ." or "Your parents are right." This conversation may be the one that tests the mentor's relationship with the participant and how much the adult can listen and empathize, acknowledging the validity of the problem without taking sides.

The mentor relationship is confidential, but if

there is serious talk about running away or committing a violent act, it must be brought to the pastor's attention immediately.

Mentoring conversations

Deliver us from evil

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will examine the temptations for today's preteen and how to make responsible Christian decisions.



WARM-UP "What are some of the things you see others doing that you might be interested in trying?"

CONVERSATION The adult mentor needs to remember clearly what it was like to be so young, and how being accepted by peers was the most important thing in the world. The mentor must also know that the temptations they were subjected to in youth may have been dangerous, but were not as deadly as what is possible in our culture. It may be shocking to hear how widespread drugs and violence are, how accessible the means to kill oneself or others are to youths, and how important these things are for acceptance in some groups.

Talking about drugs or guns or violence or sex will not put ideas in the heads of young people, or encourage them to try something they have not heard of before. The participant who feels free to discuss not only the availability of these temptations, but the honest desire to try drugs or sex, should not be put down or shamed for being honest. Neither can these actions be condoned. Here is where the mentor's integrity and honesty are important. How did the adult survive peer pressure? What are the long-term effects of trying something "just once?" In the end it will be the decision of the youth, but a better informed decision for having discussed it.

As indicated in the article at the beginning of this unit, some states have strict laws about reporting possible drug abuse or suicide attempts. Your congregation should address the steps to take that are compatible with your state's laws,

so you will know how to help your participant be safe.

Mentoring conversations

How can I help?

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will explore the role of faith and service in life.



WARM-UP "What things are you learning in confirmation that are relevant to your life and the decisions you must make?"

CONVERSATION The participant may not see any relationship between Luther's meaning of the Apostles' Creed and junior high physical education. Before discussing this question, the mentor will want to give thought to where the adult world of work and recreation intersect with the doctrines and teachings of the church. This is what all preaching should address, where all adult forums focus, and what youths must see in order to maintain their faith through their high school years.

The mentor's stories of personal faith struggles will be far more relevant than another explanation of the catechism. This is a time for the mentor to be honest about the struggles of living each day in a world where the majority of people spend Sunday mornings having brunch. The honest mentor will resist the temptation to preach or hold up his or her life as a perfect example, but will admit that there are tough times and hard decisions to make. These conversations will illustrate for the participant that sin and failure are forgivable, and have been forgiven by God through Jesus the Christ.

Mentoring activities

What sermon topic would you choose?

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will read the texts for the following Sunday's lessons.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Different versions of the Bible
Paper and pencils
Optional: Bible atlas or dictionary, hymnal

ACTIVITY Read the Old Testament text and the gospel for the following Sunday. The lectionary texts for each week are listed in the front of the hymnal, or there may be bulletin covers or inserts in the church office. Compare different versions of the same text. Look up unfamiliar words and check geographic locations in the atlas.

RESPONSE Talk about the people in the readings. Do the mentor or participant know any people who think or behave like that? What is the message of the text? If the mentor or participant was going to preach, what would the point of the sermon be? List two or three possible topics and then vote on the one you think will be chosen. Did you guess right? How is the message of the text important in the lives of the participant and the mentor?

Mentoring activities

Hear our prayer, O God

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will prepare prayers.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper and pencil
Hymnals
Optional: mural paper, book of prayers

ACTIVITY Talk about prayer. Look in the front of *LBW* for suggested prayers for a variety of occasions.

Write a prayer that contains one or two sentences for each of these petitions: praise; asking for forgiveness; saying thanks; asking for help for others.

If small groups are doing this activity, write all the prayers on mural paper. Label the list of prayers "Pray with Us," and display them where members of the congregation can read them and pray with you.

RESPONSE When is it helpful to have prayers written out and when is it possible to write your own? How often do the mentor and participant pray? What keeps them from praying more? Make a commitment to pray for each other every day for a week. How will you remember? What happens when you regularly think of someone in prayer?

Mentoring activities

Made from clay

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will work freely with clay.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Clay (plasticene, air dry, or pottery clay could work)
Paper to cover work surface
Optional: chenille wires, tape of music

ACTIVITY Begin by taking a ball of clay that is comfortable to hold in one hand. Work it in order to get a feel for it. Concentrate on how it changes shape as it is moved by your hands. Do not try to make anything, just experience it. What do the feel and smell remind you of?

When you are ready, begin to form an object that tells something about you. This may be a pet or hobby, symbol of a place you have traveled, or something meaningful to your faith. Chenille wires can be used for a base or armature, or for added interest. Quiet music will add to the experience.

RESPONSE This is not an art class! There are no bad creations. In a group, those who wish to may show their objects and talk about them, but no one should be forced to do so. If the mentor/youth are working alone, they can share the meaning of their creations when they are ready. Why is the object important to the person? What does it communicate about the other? If you wish to keep your creation you may, or the clay can be smoothed out to use another time.

Mentoring activities

Worship together

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will discuss the morning worship.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Bulletins from worship
Optional: snack or lunch, hymnal, television.

ACTIVITY Over donuts or lunch, talk about the service you just attended. Use the bulletin as a guide so you remember what was included. Then watch a televised worship service.

RESPONSE What experience was the most meaningful for the participant and mentor? What does it mean to be together to worship? What advantages do the television shows have? What are advantages of worshipping within a congregational community? Remember that each response not only talks about the experience but reveals insights about youth and mentors as well.

How might the bulletin be changed to be easier to use? What kind of music would be appealing in worship? Consider jotting down these comments and sharing them with the worship committee or church staff. It is important for youths to be heard and taken seriously in the worship life of the church.

Mentoring activities

All about us

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will make a collage that reflects an issue that is important to them.



MATERIALS NEEDED

9" x 14" paper or mural paper
Magazines or newspapers
Scissors

Glue sticks
Markers

ACTIVITY Chose a topic that you both feel strongly about and find pictures that convey this message. (Ideas might include the environment, peacekeeping, or the antidrug campaign.) Glue them to the paper and write a caption for the collage.

RESPONSE What picture did you want to use that you could not find? How important is this issue to the news media? As the mentor, what have you been able to do about alerting others to this issue? As the youth, how could you convince other youth to take this issue seriously? How might the issue collage be used to convey your message to others as a conversation starter? If possible, plan times where this could happen.

Mentoring activities

Let us break bread together

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will attend communion together.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of *LBW*
Optional: paper and markers

ACTIVITY Attend communion together either in the regular Sunday morning service or in a service for youth and mentors at a separate time. Share *LBW* for the liturgy and hymns. After the service, draw a picture of one important part of communion.

RESPONSE What does communion mean for the mentor and youth separately? What does it mean to be together for the experience? What does that say about the individual and community nature of communion? How is communion like having dinner together? What did the pictures tell you about what you each value in the communion experience?

Mentoring activities

A psalm of your own

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will write a psalm.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper and pencils or computer
Bibles

ACTIVITY Read Psalm 8 from different translations of the Bible. List the different messages in each verse. This is a psalm of praise, so list the different things the psalmist praises God for. Note that the psalm does not rhyme, but does have a certain rhythmic quality. Now make your own list of present-day things for which to praise God. Divide the list into potential verses and arrange them in any order that sounds good to you. If you are working at a computer, rearranging the verses will be easy. The psalm is finished when you both like the way it reads. Share the psalm with others. Perhaps compile psalms written by other mentors and youth into a book.

RESPONSE This is an expression of praise to God from both of you. Can you remember who suggested which words? Why is it meaningful to you? Do you understand all the psalms written by others? How did writing a psalm together differ from composing a poem, letter, or science report?

Mentoring activities

A new silent night

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will compose a new Christmas carol together.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper and pencils
List of folk tunes or hymnal

ACTIVITY Choose a tune that is familiar to you both. This may be a folk tune such as "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" or a hymn or carol. Note the rhyme pattern. Choose images from the Christmas season you wish to remember and begin to write words to your tune. Think of words that rhyme to end the second and fourth lines. You may want several verses and a repeated refrain. Sing your carol for others. Maybe a younger group of children would like to learn it.

RESPONSE This song is not supposed to win a Grammy! It is fun just to play with things and ideas that never made it into the traditional carols: twinkling lights, snow blowers, living nativity, Advent wreath, Christmas on the beach. The important part will be the conversations you have together about the meaning of this season.

Mentoring activities

The old, old story

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will write and illustrate a children's Bible story.



MATERIALS NEEDED

8½" x 11" heavy white paper
Markers and pencils
Bibles

ACTIVITY Choose a Bible story you both remember and like. Read it together from a current Bible translation. List four or five main events that happened in the story. For each event, write a sentence or two at the bottom or on another sheet of paper. Then draw a simple picture of it. Compile these into a booklet by adding a cover with a title and a blank back cover. Staple together or punch holes in the left margin and tie with yarn. Share with younger children.

RESPONSE Why did you choose that story? Do you identify with any of the characters? Do you both identify with the same character? Retelling the story in your own words is not hard when you list the events and talk about them. Try telling other Bible stories to each other. How do these stories help people to live in the world as Christians?

Mentoring activities

Your first visit

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will tour the church to see it as a visitor would see it.



MATERIALS NEEDED

None

ACTIVITY This activity may be done when the church is empty. Begin at the front door and walk through the church as if you were seeing it for the first time. It may look very different without people inside. Notice signs or messages the building itself gives about how welcome people are. Can a wheelchair get in the front door? Are there special worship helps for people who are visually impaired or hard of hearing? Are the pews comfortable? Does your eye immediately go to the cross or the altar or somewhere else? Are there banners and other symbols?

In the Sunday school area, are there child-sized tables and chairs for small children? Is the nursery clean and bright? What else do you notice when the people are gone? You may compare notes with others who toured the church and perhaps make suggestions to the church council.

RESPONSE This is where you meet every week to worship God. What message does the church building give a visitor? How is worship helped or hindered by any of these physical elements? Talk about worship in other settings, such as in a park or at a camp. What is essential for you to feel the presence of God?

Mentoring projects

Let the children come

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will take care of small children together.



PREPARATION Sign up to be in the church nursery for a morning or volunteer to babysit for a meeting that young parents will be attending. Both participant and mentor should plan to arrive 15 to 20 minutes early and stay to clean up.

PROJECT The participant and mentor need to work together to care for the children. Even though the mentor will probably know more about child care, it is important that the participant be responsible for feeding, changing, and playing with the children.

RESPONSE What new information did you learn about each other? What skills are you aware the other has that you didn't know about? How does it feel to take care of someone who is completely dependent upon you? What are the characteristics people need to become good parents? If you find you both like child care, plan to do it again.

Mentoring projects

Assisting in worship

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will assist in worship.



PREPARATION Decide how you both would be comfortable being part of worship: ushering, singing or playing instruments, doing readings, or even participating in a chapel drama. Contact the pastor or person in charge of the aspect of worship where you would like to serve—head usher, altar guild chair, or music director. Plans for worship are often made weeks in advance, and there may be some training needed. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the service, dressed in a manner acceptable to the congregation.

PROJECT Before beginning, pray together that your service may be a blessing to others. Complete your tasks remembering that you serve God first in whatever way you assist with worship.

RESPONSE How did this experience help you appreciate the "little things" that people do each week to assist with worship? What skills did you notice about each other? What other kinds of service would you like to try sometime? It is important for youth to feel a part of worship all year.

Mentoring projects

Reach out to the neighborhood

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will encourage neighborhood children to come to vacation Bible school or Sunday school.



PREPARATION Contact the Sunday school or VBS superintendent about neighborhood outreach for these programs. The outreach should be completed no later than one week before the event begins. Check on local regulations concerning flyer distribution and posting signs.

PROJECT Assist in preparing posters or flyers and distributing them to businesses or families living near the church. Be sure to include time and dates of the event or program, and the church phone number. As a group, youth and mentors can cover a lot of homes quickly. Consider dressing up in costumes or playing a musical instrument as you deliver flyers. Devise an efficient way to put flyers in doors, but take time to chat with any neighbors you meet.

RESPONSE Try to allow time to have a snack together after this project. Talk about the kinds of people you met and what the neighborhood was like. Do you expect many children to respond? What could be done to make the program more interesting? Did you see a new side of your mentor/participant you didn't know before? How did this project help to share the gospel with the world?

Mentoring projects

Leg work and elbow grease

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will work to maintain the church property.



PREPARATION Contact the pastor or property manager about projects that need to be done to maintain the church structure. Choose a project that can be completed by a group of youth and mentors in two to three hours or a youth/mentor team in one hour to 90 minutes. Assemble all of the needed equipment and dress for the project and the weather.

PROJECT Decide together how to approach the project and who will do what, rather than having the mentor direct all the action. The participant will have good ideas, too, and compromise is a good experience for both. Complete the project even if it takes longer than expected or is more involved than it looked originally. Clean up after the work is done.

RESPONSE What was it like to share the responsibility for maintaining the church? How do you both feel about church property now? What skills did you see in each other that surprised you? How was God served and the gospel spread to complete this project?

Mentoring projects

What in the world is going on?

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will find out about a global project that interests them and inform others of their findings.



PREPARATION Contact the library or synod office or call ELCA offices to obtain information on a variety of international projects.

PROJECT Decide on a topic that interests you, such as ecology, world hunger, racism, or endangered species. A group of youth may divide the topic into separate issues or examine a single problem as it appears in different parts of the world. Use the resources at the library or church offices to inform yourselves about the issue and determine ways to help. Write or call for more information, if necessary. At the end of your research (and this may take several weeks) make a poster or flyers telling others about your findings and offering ways everyone can help.

RESPONSE Were you surprised at the topic chosen? Did you find out all of the information that you needed? Are you satisfied that the programs to help in troubled areas are really helping? What can you do locally to help a global problem? Does it make any difference? What would you like the congregation to continue to do for your cause?

Mentoring projects

Act locally

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will work in a local community service agency.



PREPARATION Contact an agency that distributes food or clothing, supplies supper and beds for the homeless, or assists the elderly with shopping or other errands. Arrange to spend two or three hours helping the agency, preferably at a time when those in need will be present. This help can be given by a group of youth as long as there is ample work for everyone and the agency will not be overwhelmed by too much preteen energy.

PROJECT Arrive before the agency doors open and get instructions for serving. Agencies sometimes have rules that seem strict, but they have found them to be in the best interest of everyone. Abide by them and ask questions about any special requests.

RESPONSE Try to spend some time together right after this event. Some of the things seen at food pantries and homeless shelters may be disturbing, but it is reality for many people. A variety of emotions from laughter to tears may surface. Allow them all to come out. What good did you do at this agency? How was God served when probably no one even mentioned God or church?

Mentoring projects

Can we visit?

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will make visits to homebound members of the congregation.



PREPARATION Talk with the pastor about homebound members in the congregation who might welcome a visit by a youth/mentor

team. Select a time of year when homebound members are not overwhelmed with seasonal visitors. Don't go in November or December! How much more welcome a visit will be in the gray days of February or March or as cooler weather begins. Call the person and arrange to visit for 30 to 45 minutes at a convenient time. Take some flowers or fruit, or a church bulletin and cassette tape of the service. Talk about the need for youth to speak up if the person you will visit is hard of hearing.

PROJECT Call the person you will visit once more just before going. Your purpose in going is to provide some company to a person who doesn't get many visitors and reassure that person of the love and care of the congregation. Encourage the person to show you around the house, pointing out objects and pictures important to them. If you brought a cassette or videotape you can play part of it and listen together, then leave it for the person to enjoy later.

RESPONSE Try to talk together soon after this visit. What are the challenges that the person you visited faces daily? How was your visit a help? What did each of you do that you think made the visit pleasant? How was God's love shown through your actions?

Mentoring projects

Pray with me

FOCUS

The mentor and participant will pray for someone for a month.



PREPARATION Select someone in or out of the congregation you both want to pray for. It may be the pastor, someone in the congregation who is sick, or a friend going through a difficult time.

PROJECT Pray daily for the person selected. The first week it may help to call each other daily and even pray together over the phone. Meet once a week to pray together. Send cards or messages anonymously to the person you are praying for, offering comfort and encouragement.

RESPONSE Don't talk much about this project while you are doing it. After you have finished the month, decide if you want to continue praying for the same person, change people, or drop the project. Did you notice any change in the situation you were praying about? Did God hear your prayers? How did it feel to help someone in secret?