Called to Serve
Ideas for Commissioning, Equipping and Nurturing Your Youth Workers

Among the questions asked of ruling and teaching elders when they are ordained and installed is this: Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love? (W-4.4003)

It is a question I think all of the leaders in our churches should be willing to answer with a resounding, "We will!" The call to serve can seem daunting and overwhelming if leaders are not adequately prepared for the task at hand. Commissioning youth workers who can and will serve with the qualities of energy, intelligence, imagination and love requires more than a simple liturgy in worship. Below are ideas to help you nurture and support leaders and youth workers who have a heart and a passion for working with tweens, youth and their families.

Affirmation

It seems simple, but a word of thanks should never be underestimated. Take the time to celebrate your youth workers, to lift up and affirm their gifts for ministry and to acknowledge a job well done. Affirmation can go a long way in the effort to build and sustain energy for a task that can at times feel discouraging and unrewarding.

Covenant

Our faith is based on covenantal relationships. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them," says the Lord. Covenants are promises that aid in the establishment of expectations and boundaries. By accepting the role of youth worker, your volunteers will be entering into covenants with the staff and church leadership, with parents of your youth and with the youth themselves.

Devotion

Encourage your youth workers to be diligent in their own personal devotion. Nothing can sap energy, imagination and love quicker than a tank that is empty. Make scripture reading and prayer a part of your covenant with your leaders. Make it, too, a part of your preparation for each week's activities. As your leaders pray individually and together, they will grow in their relationship with God and in their relationships with each other, giving them a solid foundation for teaching and guiding youth.

Equip

The information, skills and resources that youth workers will need to participate in this journey do not always come innately. Prior to the beginning of the school year, set aside time to get away for a retreat. A retreat should provide time for:

- Worship and prayer
- Getting to know other leaders
- Reviewing job descriptions and roles
- Sharing of information and resources that will be helpful to their role. Ideas include, but are certainly not limited to:
  - Appropriate policies and guidelines (Child Protection, Safe Sanctuaries, etc.)
  - Developmental characteristics and stages of tweens and adolescents
  - Do's and don'ts
  - Tips on leading discussions
  - Tips on leading recreation
  - Practice leading discussions and recreation
- Plans for the upcoming year
- Fellowship and relaxation

Give Thanks

Whether it is a small token they can keep in their pocket, wallet or purse or something larger that can be hung in their home or office, give your youth workers a gift that expresses your appreciation for them and the job that they will do. The gift will also serve as a reminder of the covenant into which they have entered.

Worship

Corporate worship is also vital for maintaining one's energy, imagination and love. Worship is the appropriate place to acknowledge the covenants that have been made between the youth worker, the church, the parents and the youth. Below is a liturgy that can be used in a worship setting to commission your youth workers.

Liturgy for Commissioning Youth Workers

Pastor or Director of Youth Ministry:

Scripture tells us, "The gifts that Christ gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and some ***teachers***, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, of building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the son of God" (Ephesians 4:11-13a). Today we gather to acknowledge, to thank and to commission those who have been called to guide, to teach and to nurture the youth of this congregation.

Congregation:

During the celebration of baptism, we promise and pledge our support to love, guide, and nurture all in our midst. One of the ways that we do that is to support, encourage and uplift leaders who will walk alongside our children and our youth.

God has called you to serve as youth workers, leaders and teachers, to walk alongside the youth of this congregation offering them your energy, your intelligence, your imagination and your love.

Youth:

We give thanks for the love and support we have known here. We continue to need people willing to lead us, who love us, support us and guide us. People who understand that being a teenager can be difficult. People who understand where we are; why we ask so many questions and who are willing to help us wrestle with questions, doubts and wonder.

Youth Workers and Teachers:

We are grateful for the trust that you instill in us. We promise to love, nurture, honor, support and encourage the children and youth in our care. We promise to approach the task before us with energy, with intelligence, with imagination and with love. We promise to walk with the youth of this congregation as they question, doubt, wonder, hope and live into their calling as children of God.

Congregation and Youth:

We have heard your promises and commitment to us. We promise to support you, to pray for you and to encourage you as you heed God's calling for your life.

Pastor or Director of Youth Ministry:

As you accept your role as youth leaders within this congregation, may you know and feel the prayers, support and love that embrace you. May you engage our youth with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. May you know God's love and approval as you grow in faith and hope and love each day.

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ministries with Youth
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