

# Theological Framework for Youth Ministry

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Youth are called by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament to full partnership in the community of faith, and challenged to full participation in the life and mission of Christ and his church. This means:

1. Youth ministries are centered in baptism, the proclamation and study of the Word, and participation in the Lord's Supper;
2. Youth are the church of today as well as the church of the future;
3. Youth ministries are by, with, and for youth;
4. Youth share in shaping the church's response to the gospel in both its theology and mission to the world; and
5. Youth ministries are integrated with and not separated from the mainstream of the church's life and mission.

Youth ministries attend to the full range of life issues of the youth of the congregation and community. This means youth ministries:

- are person-oriented;
- are family-conscious;
- look beyond the youth group to the youth of the congregation, local community, and world;
- emphasize witness and service as well as nurture and community; and
- see all of life included in the reconciling gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Definition for Youth Ministry

Youth are people from the early adolescent years through the young adult years.

Youth ministries are youth and adults working together that youth might grow and participate in their baptismal relationships with their Lord, themselves, and the world through the means of grace and the congregation's ministries of proclamation, teaching, worship, community, witness, and service.

## Emphases

Youth ministry happens when youth live their Christian faith by:

- **Belonging** Youth realize the significance of their baptism into Christ and join with other Christians and peers for fellowship, fun, mutual support, and growth, including people of all cultural communities, and all physical and mental abilities.
- **Celebrating** Youth worship and respond to God through the Word and Sacraments and gather together in thanks and praise.

- **Nurturing** Youth grow in understanding themselves, their personal relationships, and their Christian faith in the context of the total Christian community including persons of all ages and abilities.
- **Witnessing** With the help and by the power of the Holy Spirit, youth tell the good news of Jesus Christ in words and actions, affirming and sharing their faith with others.
- **Serving** Youth minister to the physical, spiritual, and social needs of others by visiting the sick and imprisoned, befriending those who are alone, and attending to the needs all their neighbors.
- **Developing Leadership** Youth study the scriptures and our Christian heritage, developing God-given talents and skills and becoming committed to leadership and ministry in the church and community.
- **Being Good Stewards** Youth live faithfully as caretakers of God's world, respecting the earth, managing self and possessions, and giving time and personal resources to God's work in the world.
- **Doing Justice** Youth respond to the call of Christ to work for fairness and a just way of life for all people, especially the poor, oppressed, and forgotten.

(Adapted from the original document produced by the ELCA transition team for Youth Ministry, 1988.)

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