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Introduction

This updated edition of resources for youth ministry leaders is intended to be utilized as a guide for churches and individuals who are seeking to provide a quality youth ministry in their congregation. Neither this booklet, nor any other one resource can provide all of the tools or training that are necessary for ministry with youth; however, it is our hope that this booklet will provide the insights and tools that are needed to assist you with the administrative aspects of ministry with youth in your congregation.

Keep in mind that these administrative aspects are only one segment of youth ministry. All who are called to ministry with youth should seek regular training to keep their skills updated, as well as in other areas of ministry such as community building, worship, mission and service.

The Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ continually strives to offer training and events for youth and youth leaders. You will find all of our current offerings on our website’s “Make Disciples of Jesus” page (https://www.sneucc.org/disciples) under “Youth & Young Adult Leadership.” It is our intention to offer events that will enhance local church youth ministries, and offer opportunities for youth to connect with others throughout the wider United Church of Christ.

Youth ministry leaders can sometimes feel isolated, are often undervalued, and may work without much assistance or support. Through Southern New England Conference connections, youth ministry leaders can network with one another and find opportunities to grow in their ministry and their faith. Through this networking, they may choose to combine youth ministry opportunities with neighboring congregations. The Conference is here to offer support; please feel free to contact us for assistance.

All who are involved in ministries with youth need to know that this is a special calling and that your efforts are indeed appreciated and valued. *Remember that you are not alone.* Trust that God will guide you as you seek help from others.

*Your SNEUCC Faith Formation Team*

https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team

**Note:**
For those whose ministry includes both youth and faith formation for children and/or all ages, please see The Faith Formation Leader’s Handbook on the Southern New England Conference’s “Hiring Faith Formation & Youth Ministry Leaders” page: https://www.sneucc.org/hiring-faith-formation-and-youth-ministry-leaders.
The secret message communicated to most young people today by the society around them is that they are not needed, that the society will run itself quite nicely until they — at some distant point in the future — will take over the reigns. Yet the fact is that the society is not running itself nicely... because the rest of us need all the energy, brains, imagination and talent that young people can bring to bear down on our difficulties. For society to attempt to solve its desperate problems without the full participation of even very young people is imbecile.

— Alvin Toffler
An Invaluable and Comprehensive Resource for Youth Ministries

From the founder of Ministry Architects (https://ministryarchitects.com), Mark DeVries shares his wisdom and knowledge from 30+ years as a youth minister, having learned from both his mistakes and his successes.
A Covenant for Church Youth Ministries

This Covenant for Church Youth Ministries is inspired by and adapted from “The National Charter,” a similar set of promises promoted in the United Kingdom by two organizations — the Association of Christian Youth and Children’s Workers, and Youthwork — a collaboration of organizations working together to resource and inspire Christian youth work. The Eastern Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ obtained permission from these UK organizations to draw upon and modify the contents of “The National Charter” for use in this covenant. It was then shared with the Association of United Church Educators, and is used with its permission and blessings.

Background
The Covenant for Church Youth Ministries is a set of eight promises that churches adopt when considering the practices and principles they will use in nurturing and supporting people, both paid and volunteer, who work with youth. (Youth are defined using the United Church of Christ guidelines – ages 13-18.)

1. We will pray and support.
   We believe that our youth workers need spiritual support in their work with young people.
   We promise to pray for our youth workers and keep their needs a high priority in church prayer life.

2. We will acknowledge the importance of gifts and God’s call.
   We believe that gifts and call are best discerned in the context of the faith community.
   We promise to provide opportunities for prayerful discernment.

3. We will provide opportunities for retreat and reflection.
   We believe that taking time to think and pray is just as essential for our youth workers as organizing events and meeting young people.
   We promise to provide opportunities for our youth workers to use part of their schedules for retreat, reflection, worship and personal development.
4. We will provide ongoing training and development.

We believe that maintaining the gifts and skills of the youth workers is an ongoing process and that it is important to continually invest in professional development.

We promise to set aside time and money to provide this for our youth workers.

5. We will give a full day of rest each week.

We believe that taking regular time off helps maintain our youth workers’ passion and energy for their work with young people.

We promise to actively encourage our youth workers to take a day away from their role each week.

6. We will share responsibility as a priesthood of all believers.

We believe that having a youth worker does not release the rest of the church from our responsibilities toward young people.

We promise to encourage everyone to play a part in volunteering, praying for and supporting young people.

7. We will celebrate and appreciate.

We believe it is vital to acknowledge what our youth workers are doing and the commitment they have made to work with young people in our church.

We promise to make sure our youth workers know they are appreciated and we will celebrate their achievements.

8. We will strive to be a just employer.

We believe it is important to have clear structures and procedures for recruiting and employing youth workers, and to provide supportive management structures which are fair and just.

We promise to follow non-exploitive practices in the way we employ our youth workers.
Youth ministry leaders are role models and advisors to youth in churches. They enable and empower youth to take a major role in choosing the direction of the group, implementing its activities, and finding the place of the teens within the life of the entire congregation. They guide the youth in areas of learning, worship, recreation, mission, and participation in the total life of the congregation.

COMMON PRACTICES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPERIMENTATION

Many churches have a youth group(s) that meets for camaraderie, recreation, learning, worship, and mission. They also plan activities such as retreats, fundraising projects, and recreation. These youth groups have adult youth ministry leaders. They may also choose to have elected youth officers who work with the adult leaders in developing goals and planning programs and activities.

Youth ministry leaders should have experience and some training working with adolescents, be screened by the youth ministry or faith formation committee/board, and become familiar with and covenant to adhere to the safety policies of the congregation. Some churches have youth ministry leaders and assistants for each group. The assistants are learning to replace the youth ministry leaders in the following year.

Other congregations may be sharing their youth ministry leader with a neighboring congregation. New ministry models are being experimented with as both our teens and our congregations are adapting to the shifts and changes of our secular culture. Experimentation was made for such a time as this!

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the youth leader(s) will vary depending on whether there is a youth minister or another staff person with responsibilities for youth work, the expectations of the group, and the age of the youth. Middle high age youth need more help in programming, for instance, than senior high youth. Typical responsibilities of the youth leader include:

- Preparing for and attending meetings/activities of the youth group. Arriving early and staying until all members have left, seeing that the safety policies and practices of the congregation are maintained.
- Participating in planning programs and activities: music, recreation, outreach, intergenerational congregational activities, and study of issues.
- Seeing that the place where you meet is ready for your gatherings, as well as cleaned up before everyone leaves.
- Meeting regularly with your pastor or supervisor, clarifying your leadership role and discussing any issues to be resolved.
- Becoming familiar with the resources available from your Conference for youth participation (https://www.sneucc.org/disciples)
• Becoming familiar with high quality youth ministry resources.
• Being an advocate for the young people’s participation in the mission of the church.
• Building healthy relationships with the youth, and fostering healthy relationships between the teens.
• Being welcoming of all and mindful of diversity.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES NEEDED

• Being a good listener
• Understanding of and commitment to your congregation’s mission and vision
• Planning and organizational skills
• A willingness to grow in your faith
• Having an open, honest, and friendly nature
• Appreciation and respect for young people
• Enthusiasm and energy
• Ability to bring people together
• Ability to play without being either overly “adult” or being one of the kids

WAYS TO INCREASE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND EFFECTIVENESS

• Participate in workshops or courses sponsored by your association, conference, local colleges, or technical schools on human development, planning, sex education, drug abuse, working with youth, etc. The Southern New England Conference offers a Faith Formation Leadership Certificate Program for faith formation and youth ministry leaders: https://www.sneucc.org/certification. Classes can be taken separately without seeking a certificate.
• Attend conferences with and about youth: https://www.sneucc.org/events-and-programs-for-youth.
• Confer with conference staff who have responsibility in the area of youth: https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team.
• Ensure that you are provided with a job description outlining responsibilities, expectations, and accountability. (A sample youth ministry leader job description is included in this handbook.)
• Talk with experienced youth leaders from your church or other churches and exchange best practices and program ideas. The Southern New England Conference offers Communities of Practice for faith formation and youth ministry leaders. Contact a member of the Faith Formation Team for more information: https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team.
• Participate regularly in worship and other activities of the church.
• Engage in Christian practices.
• Become familiar with current youth ministry resources: https://www.sneucc.org/youth-ministry-resources.
Establishing a Youth Ministry Committee

Adapted from The Youth Ministry Handbook, Rev. Kim Mislin, First Congregational Church, Bakersfield, CA. Used by permission.

Note: This article is intended for larger congregations with good-sized youth groups. The information provided is still important, but should be adapted by each individual congregation to meet its unique youth ministry needs.

No one person should be responsible for all aspects of a youth ministry program. There must be shared leadership and a network of accountability, even if the church has only fifty members and four youth. Without this, the church leaves itself open to the potential for significant liability. The easiest way to establish this network of accountability is by establishing a Committee for Youth Ministry that is accountable to the governing body of the church, and works closely and cooperatively with the hired faith formation and/or youth ministry leader(s).

The group that the Committee for Youth Ministry reports to should have a member of the Committee for Youth Ministry as a voting member. This person serves as the link between both groups.

The establishment of a Committee for Youth Ministry makes a clear statement about the group’s desire to be involved, and intention in having a high quality program for its youth. This positive approach provides a good foundation for the ministry.

A Committee for Youth Ministry should include representation from the governing body that the Youth Committee reports to, parents, the youth themselves, other pertinent staff, and other interested persons.

If youth activities such as choirs, service clubs, and sporting groups are also considered to be youth ministry activities, then representatives of these groups should also be voting members of the Youth Ministry Committee. The goal is to provide a voice for all aspects of the youth ministry program, enriched by the viewpoints of those not directly involved in this ministry, thereby providing balance.

The Committee for Youth Ministry should exercise leadership in the following ways:

1. Establish a Mission Statement of the vision, objectives, and theology of the youth ministry program.

2. Establish in writing clear guidelines and procedures for all youth ministry activities, regularly reviewed and modified as needed. Guidelines and procedures should include fiscal matters, so that those involved in youth ministry are aware of the financial resources available to the program, such as a fund-raising policy, for instance.
3. Review and approve youth ministry activities before they occur. It will be up to the committee to decide which activities require approval.

4. Act as an advocate for the youth and for the adult leaders with prayer, affirmation, and support. Find opportunities to publicly acknowledge the youth and their adult leaders.

5. Mediate difficulties and disputes that involve the youth and/or the youth ministry program modeling positive conflict management and communication skills so that problems are dealt with directly and in a respectful, timely manner.

After a committee is established, it should be publicly recognized in a worship service in whatever way is consistent with the particular faith tradition. In this way the entire church acknowledges and empowers this very important ministry.

One of the first tasks of this committee should be to discuss and draw up a covenant for working with the staff member(s) responsible for youth ministries, outlining specific roles, relationships, and expectations of each party.

The Youth Ministry Committee should meet monthly for the purpose of being consistently and faithfully involved in the youth ministry program. Once a committee is established and becomes comfortable with a routine, an hour should be sufficient for conducting most business. A sample agenda for a routine meeting is as follows:

1. Prayer
2. Sharing of joys and concerns
3. Review of events requiring approval and any other business
4. Long-range planning
5. Other business
6. Affirmation of youth and leaders
7. Prayer

The Committee for Youth Ministry should report monthly to the committee or governing body to which it is accountable. In this way, open communication will be maintained and the youth ministry program stands a better chance of being integrated into the overall church ministry.

A planning retreat is often helpful when a committee first forms. A retreat can be a wonderful time for relationship-building and dreaming, as well as designing concrete guidelines and plans.
Sample Part-Time Job Description for a Youth Position

Adapted from Called To Educational and Formational Ministries: A Guide for Local Churches, Educators, and Youth Workers, Association of United Church Educators. Used by permission.

YOUTH MINISTRY COORDINATOR

Purpose of the position: To provide overall leadership for youth ministries including guidance and resources for all aspects of the program in conjunction with the life of the entire congregation.

Functions:
Administration
Supervision
Leadership Development
Planning
Resource Development
Communication
Relationship-building

Responsibilities

Participation
Attend all youth group meetings, volunteer meetings, planning sessions, other church meetings, and events/activities necessary for effective program leadership.

Leadership
The Youth Ministry Coordinator will provide leadership, training, resource evaluation and/or development & selection, and support for youth ministry programming, and assist youth youth ministry volunteers with program planning — including in-person and virtual — and implementation.

Communication
• The Youth Ministry Coordinator will provide regular communication of youth ministry activities, issues, and programming to the Youth Ministry Committee/Board.
• The Youth Ministry Coordinator will provide communication of community, church, and wider UCC activities, issues, and youth ministry programming to the youth and their families.

Relationships
• The Youth Ministry Coordinator will maintain a relationship with the Youth Ministry Committee/Board and pastor so as to be provided with (semi-) annual evaluations of programming, leadership style, etc.
• The Youth Ministry Coordinator will work with the pastor and other boards/committees of the congregation to provide intergenerational faith formation opportunities to foster relationships across the generations toward growth in faith for all.
• The Youth Coordinator is directly responsible to the Youth Ministry Committee/Board.

Time required: 20 hours per week
Administrative Resources

Types of Youth Ministry Leaders

Youth Leader

In many congregational settings, this person is a volunteer or an active lay person who advises the youth group(s). At the very least, this person should be reimbursed for basic expenses such as child care, registration for youth ministry training and seminars, purchase of youth ministry resources, and the like. A volunteer should be considered a member of the church staff, even though he or she may not receive monetary compensation. The absence of a salary should in no way diminish the value and quality of the expectations of the volunteer who takes on this important ministry. A stipend or wage will depend on the amount of hours, the level of experience and expertise, and the degree to which this position is seen as a volunteer position.

Professional Youth Leader

Typically, a non-ordained staff member with three or more years experience in youth ministry and/or a degree in theological education, education, or a related field.

Southern New England Conference Certified Youth Leader

A paid professional who has completed the course work and other requirements for certification in the Southern New England Conference’s Faith Formation Leadership Certificate Program (https://www.sneucc.org/certification).

Associate or Assistant Minister for Youth Ministry

An authorized or ordained minister for whom the majority of his/her portfolio includes youth ministry. This type of minister should be compensated according to the Southern New England Conference clergy compensation guidelines.

Contractor or Consultant

A consultant is generally contracted by the project rather than working a set number of hours. As a contractor, they are self-employed and as such are responsible for providing their own resources, primary office, and benefits. The hourly or unit rate is thus higher than for a typical employee.
How a Consultant May Be Utilized

- Develop a program for youth ministry with and for the congregation. This could include an overview of the church year, an outline for youth group meetings, and long range plans for the program, for example.
- Recruit volunteer youth leaders and serve as a mentor to them, providing leadership training, program evaluation, and resources.
- Serve as an interim youth minister.
- Serve as a resource person to boards and committees responsible for youth ministry and/or youth ministry personnel. This may include developing a job description, compensation recommendations, clarification of goals and strategies, and assisting in the search process. (Your Southern New England Conference Faith Formation Team is available for this type of support through the offerings your congregation already gives to support the Conference: https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team.)
- Serve as a mentor for a new youth minister, providing resources, support, and guidance for a specific period of time.

A Note About These Categories

Although the descriptions above seem to fit nicely into labeled boxes, the educational backgrounds of youth ministry leaders can be as different and varied as each individual. Some discover their call to youth ministry early on, and are able to follow a college (and sometimes graduate school) curriculum that gives them a good academic background in Bible, theology, and educational theory. Others arrive at a position in youth ministry much later, but are able to use their life experiences in the church, as well as their secular employment experience to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

It should also be mentioned that the course of study that most ordained ministers undertake in seminary does not include training in youth ministry. Be sure to talk with prospective ordained candidates to find out what their training and experience has been with teens, rather than assume that their process to ordination included such training. It will be up to the search committee to examine the education and training background of the candidates they interview for the congregation’s youth ministry position.

Do You Feel Called By God?

The crucial element in the decision to pursue ministry of any sort is a "call." Do you feel you have a call from God to do this work? In other words, do you believe in your innermost heart that God wants you to do this? Take time to reflect on this carefully because the issue of call is central to ordained ministries in the United Church of Christ. It is also possible to know you want to be doing a certain ministry in the church and not feel the need for the ecclesiastical authority of a recognized ministry.

If you discern that you do have a call and wish to act on it by engaging in the process to become an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, talk with your pastor to learn how to get started.
Compensation Guidelines for Youth Ministry

Calculating Compensation

As Christian congregations, we should strive to provide our employees with just and fair compensation. A member of the church’s staff who is struggling to make ends meet may find that the incurring stress affects the way they perform in ministry. The following recommendations are guidelines to help a congregation do its best to provide just and fair compensation for its youth ministry leader.

The compensation for a youth ministry leader should be appropriate to the individual’s education and experience. Persons with experience in complementary fields (such as art, music, and drama, for instance) should have this expertise considered in the discussion of the compensation package. The number of years of church ministry experience and the number of Christian education and/or youth ministry workshops and continuing education courses taken also should be considered when determining the salary for the youth ministry leader.

For a full-time youth ministry position in the church:
(Salary for part-time positions would be the appropriate percentage of the full-time salary guidelines.)

- A person who is ordained or commissioned should be compensated according to the Conference’s guidelines for clergy.
- A person who holds a master’s degree in religious or public school education may be compensated relative to the equivalent of a public school teacher in the church’s district with the same education and same years of experience.
- A person who holds a bachelor’s degree in religious or public school education may be compensated relative to the equivalent of a public school teacher in the church’s district with the same education and same years of experience.
- A person who has completed the equivalent of a denominational noncredit program of training in youth ministry may be compensated at least 80% of the salary of a first year public school teacher in the church’s district.
- For those who have organizational skills and some educational background but little training or experience in youth ministry, compensation at no less than 60% of what a first year public school teacher in the church’s district receives is recommended. It is also recommend that the church pay for this person to complete a program of training in youth ministry, such as the Southern New England Conference’s Faith Formation Leadership Certificate Program (https://www.sneucc.org/certification).

As a person receives more training, the salary package should be adjusted annually with a pay raise that recognizes this achievement.
Recommended Benefits for Half- to Full-Time Employees

- Vacation with pay
- Travel allowance
- Health/dental insurance & pension as available through the UCC Pension Boards
- Professional expenses
  - Books
  - Registration fees for workshops, trainings, conferences
  - Membership in youth ministry and faith formation organizations such as the Association of United Church Educators (auce-ucc.org)

Compensation Guidelines Chart

For comparison, other faith formation ministry compensation guidelines may be found here: https://www.sneucc.org/files/websites/sne/Compensation-Guidelines-CT-2014.pdf
These guidelines were compiled by the former Connecticut Association of United Church Educators. Please be sure to incorporate a cost of living increase of 0.5% per year.
## Employee/Volunteer Screening Form for Youth Ministry

*Adapted from a form developed by the United Church of Christ, Congregational, Norwell, MA. Used by permission.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>________________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last</td>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Telephone numbers |  _____________________________________________________________ |
| Best number to reach you | Other |

E-mail address |  ________________________________________________________________ |

Other name(s), if any, by which I have been known |  ________________________________________________________________ |

Position(s) for which you are applying |  ________________________________________________________________ |

Current (or Previous) Employer name and address |  Company |

| Street |
| |  City | State | Zip |

Your immediate supervisor |  ________________________________________________________________ |

Church affiliation |  ________________________________________________________________ |

Church | Town and State |

Are you currently a member of this church?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

How long were you affiliated with this church? |  ________________________________________________________________ |

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a felony?
(If yes, please explain - attach a separate sheet if necessary.)
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Do you have a valid driver’s license?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
If you have a valid driver’s license, please indicate: state __________________________ and driver’s license # _______________________

Have you ever had your driver’s license suspended because of alcohol or drug abuse? (If yes, please explain - attach a separate sheet if necessary.)
☐ Yes ☐ No

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Has a civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct ever resulted in a judgment being entered against you, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations expired? (If yes, please explain - attach a separate sheet if necessary.)
☐ Yes ☐ No

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

I have never terminated my employment or service in a volunteer position or had my employment or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct; physical abuse or financial misconduct. (If yes, please explain - attach a separate sheet if necessary.)
☐ True ☐ False

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that will call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying? (If yes, please explain - attach a separate sheet if necessary.)
☐ Yes ☐ No

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for youth work.

________________________________________          ____________________
Signature of Applicant                     Date

________________________________________          ____________________
Signature of Church Representative        Date
List three personal references who are not relatives:

(1) Name ______________________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________________________
City, State, and Zip Code ________________________________________________
Telephone number ______________________________________________________
E-mail address _________________________________________________________
Relationship to you _____________________________________________________
Years known ___________________________________________________________

(2) Name ______________________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________________________
City, State, and Zip Code ________________________________________________
Telephone number ______________________________________________________
E-mail address _________________________________________________________
Relationship to you _____________________________________________________
Years known ___________________________________________________________

(3) Name ______________________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________________________
City, State, and Zip Code ________________________________________________
Telephone number ______________________________________________________
E-mail address _________________________________________________________
Relationship to you _____________________________________________________
Years known ___________________________________________________________

Please continue to the next page
I hereby request the ________________________________ Police Department to release any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state or national. I hereby release said police department from any liability resulting from such disclosure.

________________________________________   ______________________________
Signature                                    Print name

________________________________________   ______________________________
Print maiden name, if applicable             Social Security Number

Print all aliases

________________________________________
________________________________________

Date of birth                                  Place of birth

________________________________________
Today’s date

Print name _____________________________________________________________

Records sent to __________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________
Service of Covenanting
for the Youth Ministry Leader

This service of worship and covenanting should be welcoming of children and youth by incorporating the arts and as many of the five senses as possible, as well as leadership by children and youth at appropriate times. Adapt as needed for your particular congregation.

PRELUDE

OPENING STATEMENT
Dear Friends in Christ,
Our ministry to youth celebrates the love of God for all God’s children, even as it celebrates our hope for the church of today and tomorrow.

HYMN: Called as Partners in Christ's Service  TNCH #495
or
Jesus Loves Me  TNCH #327
or a hymn/song of your choice

INVOCATION

WORDS OF INTRODUCTION
[Name of youth ministry leader, and their title] stands before you as the person with whom we entrust this ministry on behalf of our church family.

As [name of youth ministry leader] builds trusted relationships with the youth in our congregation, we are reminded that this is an opportunity for all of us to learn, to grow in faith, and to serve together. As [name of youth ministry leader] ministers in God’s service, it is our responsibility to support them with our engagement, our cooperation, and our prayers.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE
Choose from Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 25:4-10, or a Hebrew scripture from your choice.

(YOUTH) CHOIR ANTHEM OR SPECIAL MUSIC OFFERING
COVENANT

Pastor: Dear friends, [name of church] has declared that, having gathered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it has called [name of youth minister] to minister in this place as [title of position] and that it now receives them as appointed by God for this ministry.

[Name of youth ministry leader], are you willing to enter this covenant with [name of church]?

Youth Ministry Leader: I am willing, and I promise to serve this church faithfully, teaching the word of God, according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ.

Pastor: People of [name of church], please rise is body or in spirit and affirm your covenant with your youth ministry leader.

Congregation: We, the people of [name of church], receive [name of youth ministry leader] as our [title of position], promising to labor with them in the ministry of the gospel and to give them due honor and support.

CHARGE TO THE YOUTH MINISTRY LEADER

[Name of youth ministry leader], may the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you, that in this faith community, you may do God’s will in the service of Christ. On behalf of this congregation, we commend you to this work and promise you our prayers, encouragement, nurture, and support.

RESPONSE BY THE YOUTH MINISTRY LEADER (optional)

A statement of faith incorporating the youth ministry leader’s understanding of and hopes for the youth ministry of the church, utilizing visuals and symbols of education/formation and/or youth ministries.

At this time, simple gifts of symbols of youth ministry may be presented to the faith formation and/or youth ministry leader to exemplify these promises, this work, and the congregation’s support.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Great and gracious God, be with [name of youth ministry leader] who has now affirmed their commitment to follow Christ and to serve in his name. Give them openness, patience, and vision. Strengthen us all as we follow Christ’s example and way of love and service to others. We pray this in your glory. Amen.

HYMN: You Are Called to Tell the Story  TNCH #357

or hymn/song of your choice

BENEDICTION
Administrative Resources

Ongoing Nurture and Support

Adapted from Called To Educational and Formational Ministries: A Guide for Local Churches, Educators, and Youth Workers, Association of United Church Educators. Used by permission.

Support Group
The Southern New England Conference provides its faith formation and youth ministry leaders with Communities of Practice. These groups of local church faith formation and youth ministry leaders meet regularly with colleagues from the same geographic area to share best practices and networking opportunities. Contact a member of the Faith Formation Team for more information: https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team.

Personnel Committee
If there is a separate personnel committee, be sure that new staff members are connected and have regular meetings with that group. The policies of your congregation will act as a guide to the frequency of the meeting. These meetings should always include time for meeting with a staff person without other staff members present. This will help to build an atmosphere of trust and ensure honest communication between individual staff members and the committee. The evaluation process should be clearly defined (see the Periodic Review page that follows) and a personnel file begun. Confidentiality must be respected.

Communication
Affirm and support the youth ministry of your congregation by intentionally keeping the youth ministry leader's role and work visible. Youth ministry events can be publicized in your newsletter, bulletin, on your church’s website, Facebook page, and other social media. Announcements can be made during worship. Determine how frequently and in what role the youth ministry leader will participate in worship with the teens to help the congregation to view them as a part of the Body of Christ. Consider other ministries in the life of your congregation that can be opened up to the youth and made an intergenerational opportunity for all.

Personal and Professional Growth
Encourage and support the personal and professional growth of your youth ministry leader. Make available resources (time and money) for them to attend professional seminars and workshops, as well as personal retreat time for spiritual nurture. The Southern New England Conference offers a Faith Formation Leadership Certificate Program for faith formation and youth ministry leaders: https://www.sneucc.org/certification. Include the class’ fees in your budgeting for your youth ministry leader’s training and continuing education. Provide an allowance for books and other resources. Provide money to join professional associations such as the Association of United Church Educators (www.auce-ucc.org), which will also acquaint them with colleagues in youth ministry and solid professional development opportunities.

Resources from the Southern New England Conference
The SNEUCC Faith Formation Team curates resources and current information about youth ministries on its “Make Disciples of Jesus” webpages: https://www.sneucc.org/disciples. Visit these pages often for access to best practices and UCC-friendly resources. Scroll down the landing page to “Youth & Young Adult Discipleship.”
Administrative Resources

Faith Formation Leadership Certificate Program

https://www.sneucc.org/certification

Classes may be taken as either part of the certificate program or as stand-alone workshops
Participants may choose to take classes either as stand-alone opportunities, or as part of a process for certification in faith formation leadership in the Southern New England Conference UCC.

Classes are for anyone with a passion for faith formation and/or youth ministries
While designed for the Southern New England Conference, anyone — both lay leaders and authorized ministers — within or beyond the United Church of Christ and southern New England, may participate, with the understanding that the focus will be on ministry within a United Church of Christ congregation.

Faith formation and youth ministry for the 21st Century
Our instructors are selected for their experience and expertise in their specific ministries, and who present best practices and teaching methods for forming faith and making disciples in today’s congregations, particularly during this post-pandemic time.

Classes offered over the course of two years
Visit https://www.sneucc.org/certification to view the list of class for the current program year.

✴ Engaging Our Sacred Scripture’s Story
✴ Serving Together — Mission For All Ages
✴ Boundary Awareness for Faith Formation & Youth Ministry Leaders
✴ Exploring Curriculum & Digital Resources
✴ Developing Faith — Ages & Stages
✴ Living Into the Mystery — Worship & Sacraments in the United Church of Christ
✴ Making Disciples — Theories & Practices for the 21st Century
✴ Faith Formation 101 — Practices for a Sustainable Ministry
✴ Youth Ministry 101 — Practices for a Sustainable Ministry
✴ Creating Safe Environments — Policies & Practices
✴ Racial Justice
Review is a process for assessing what is of value. The review or evaluation process is not a substitute for conflict resolution. Rather it is a means of identifying growth and growth goals and affirming the youth ministry leader. This review guide has been arranged in three sections so that the board or committee and the youth ministry leader can work separately, then together, to compare expectations and work out any discrepancies.

Questions and areas for the Board or Committee to address
- What are the strengths of our youth ministry leader?
- Is support for your youth ministry leader adequate? Not adequate? In what ways?
- List the goals the committee considers important to implement for the coming year.
- Which goals could our youth ministry leader plan/coordinate/implement?
- For which goals might other staff take responsibility?
- For which goals might volunteers take responsibility?
- List possible ways to implement these plans.
- What are areas in which our youth ministry leader might consider continuing education in the coming year?
- How will participation in continuing education be facilitated?

Questions and areas for the youth ministry leader to address
- What are some major personal accomplishments of the past year?
- List the goals you see as important to implement for the coming year.
- Which goals could I plan/coordinate/implement?
- For which goals might other staff take responsibility?
- For which goals might volunteers take responsibility?
- List possible ways to implement these plans.
- What are the areas in which I might engage in continuing education in the coming year?
- What will I need in the way of resources and time to do so?
- How has the Board or Committee been most helpful? Least helpful?

Questions and areas for both the Board or Committee and the youth ministry leader to address together
- List the strengths of the youth ministry leader.
- What are the highlights of our church's youth ministry in the last year?
- Which previously set goals were met? Which were not? Which goals were changed or modified?
- Are the position description expectations still realistic? What might be added? Deleted? Changed?
- How can the support for the youth ministry leader be improved?

Recommendations for the coming year
- Compensation review
- Resources for ministry (volunteers, program and expense money, facilities, etc.)
- What goals for the coming year could strengthen the church's youth ministry? Be specific and realistic!
Youth ministry is not about getting things accomplished — only the act of God can bring about the transformation we seek. Youth ministry is about participating deeply in young people’s lives as we await, together in suffering and joy, the coming of God.

— Andrew Root
Guidelines for Adult Supervision

Adapted from The Youth Ministry Handbook, Rev. Kim Mislin, First Congregational Church, Bakersfield, CA. Used by permission.

Adult leaders for a youth ministry activity function as representatives of the church and as such are held to different standards than when acting as a parent or adult in their own family. The rules, guidelines, and safety policies of the church must be followed by all leaders at all events, thereby providing appropriate supervision for the youth. Illegalities and irresponsibility cannot be allowed. Supervision must be consistent, reasonable, and prudent.

Adults are encouraged to remember that they will be providing both supervision and modeling adult Christian behavior for the youth in their care, and should endeavor to see that the example they set is consistent with the values and expectations of the church community.

The following chart outlines minimal levels of adult supervision necessary for youth ministry activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>During the day at Church</th>
<th>During the day &amp;/or overnight, at the Church or off-site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2nd Grade</td>
<td>2 adults per group</td>
<td>1 adult for every 3 children; 2 adults minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd-6th Grade</td>
<td>2 adults per group</td>
<td>1 adult for every 4 children; 2 adults minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th-8th Grade</td>
<td>2 adults per group</td>
<td>1 adult for every 4 youth; 2 adults minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th Grade</td>
<td>2 adults per group</td>
<td>1 adult for every 5 youth; 2 adults minimum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An “adult” is defined as a person at least 21 years of age. Adult leaders must be a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth in the group. Whenever possible, a male and a female adult team is preferred.

A “group” is defined as youth of one specified age group from one church.

Any scheduled event that does not have the minimum number of adults required as outlined in the chart above must be cancelled.

There is no church-sanctioned event in youth ministry that permit one adult to be alone with the youth. There must always be a minimum of two adults present. Each adult leader must ensure that they are never alone, out of sight of others, with a single youth.
Planning Overnight Activities or Field Trip

- At the beginning of the year, all youth complete the MEDICAL RELEASE FORM. This completed form must be on file in the church office. Each time an overnight activity or field trip is planned, the original must be taken with the group leader while a copy remains in the church office. This form must be reviewed and updated for each trip by the adult leader, and is updated at the beginning of each program year.

- The IN-TOWN MIDDLE/SENIOR HIGH ACTIVITY PERMISSION FORM is for youth in grades 7-12 only, and will be filled out at the beginning of the year and kept on file in the church office. Each time an in-town activity is planned, the original must be taken with the adult leader while the copy must stay in the church office. This form is updated at the beginning of each program year.

- The IN-TOWN YOUTH ACTIVITY PERMISSION FORM is for youth up to and including 6th grade. This form must be filled out each time an overnight or youth activity is planned. The original must be taken by the adult leader while a copy is kept on file in the church office.

Additional Procedures for Planning Off-Site Field Trips

1. When an out-of-town field trip is planned, the adult leader coordinating the activity should inform the Committee on Youth Ministry (or Faith Formation Committee/Board) at least two months prior to the planned event.

   Approval of any activity must be secured before any specific fundraising can be done. If funds are raised for a specific activity and the activity is canceled, the funds must be returned unless specified at the time of the fundraising that if the activity was canceled, the monies raised would go into the general youth account.

2. The OUT-OF-TOWN ACTIVITY PERMISSION FORM must be provided to the parents/guardians of the youth involved in the activity.

3. By the day of the trip, leaders must submit all necessary signed field trip permission slips, copies of which will be kept in the office, a definitive itinerary, including phone numbers, and the originals of the Medical Release Forms, copies of which will be kept in the church.

All drivers for out-of-town field trips must be 25 years or older and have a copy of their drivers’ license and proof of insurance in the church office.
Medical Release Form

From The Youth Ministry Handbook, Rev. Kim Mislin, First Congregational Church, Bakersfield, CA. Used by permission.

Name of youth ___________________________________________ Birthdate ______________
Address ____________________________________________________________________________
Name of parent or guardian __________________________________________________________
Best phone number to reach you __________________________________________________________________________
Youth’s physician ___________________________ Phone __________________________
Emergency contact ___________________________ Phone __________________________
Emergency contact ___________________________ Phone __________________________

Health History (Please check all that apply)
☐ Frequent colds  ☐ Seizure Disorders  ☐ Physical disability
☐ Appliances (retainers contact lenses, etc.)  ☐ Stomach upsets  ☐ Diabetes
☐ Sleep disturbances  ☐ Mental disability  ☐ Asthma
☐ Emotional/behavioral disability  ☐ Vision/hearing impairment  ☐ Motion sickness
☐ Other ____________________________________________________________________________
☐ Allergies _________________________________________________________________________

If any of the above is checked, please give important details __________________________________

Date of last Tetanus shot ____________________________________________________________

Is your child/youth taking a prescription or non-prescription medication?
☐ Yes
☐ No
1. Medication ________________________________________________________________
   Dosage and Frequency of dosage ____________________________________________
2. Medication ________________________________________________________________
   Dosage and Frequency of dosage ____________________________________________
3. Medication ________________________________________________________________
   Dosage and Frequency of dosage ____________________________________________
Can your son/daughter be expected to take the right amount of medication at the proper time? If the answer is no, arrangements must be made with the adult in charge.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

☐ I give my child permission to administer his/her own medications

________________________________________
Signature of parent/guardian

Youth’s insurance carrier & policy number __________________________________________

Name of primary insured _____________________________________________

Other pertinent information _____________________________________________

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I, the undersigned, parent/legal guardian of __________________________________________, do hereby consent to any x-ray exam, anesthetic, medical diagnosis or treatment and hospital services that may be rendered to said minor, under the general or specific instructions of __________________________________________

(name of youth’s physician)

or, if unavailable, two on-call physicians at a hospital or clinic. It is understood that this consent is given in advance of any specific diagnosis or treatment, and is given to encourage those persons who have temporary custody of my child, in my absence, and said physician to exercise their best judgment as to the requirements of such diagnosis or said medical treatment.

This consent will remain effective until the _____ day of ______________________, 20______ delivered to said persons entrusted with the care, custody and control of said minor child. I understand that any and all medical expenses incurred are my responsibility and that there is not medical insurance coverage provided by __________________________________________

(name of church or organization)

________________________________________
Signature of parent/guardian

Date
In-Town Youth Activity Permission Form

Your child/youth would like to participate in the following activity:

Activity _______________________________________________________

Description _______________________________________________________

Date and time of activity _____________________________________________

Leaders _________________________________________________________

Cost ___________________________________________________________

Method of transportation _____________________________________________

Additional information _____________________________________________

I give my child/youth, ______________________________________________, permission to participate in the activity listed above.

Youth’s name _____________________________________________________

Address _________________________________________________________

Parent or guardian’s name __________________________________________

Best phone number to reach you ______________________________________

Emergency contact __________________________________ Phone ____________

Special instructions _______________________________________________

Parents: Does your child’s/youth's Medical Release Form need updating?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Parent or guardian’s signature _________________________________________

Youth’s signature ___________________________________________________

Date _____________________________________________________________
Out-of-Town and Special Activity Permission Form

Your child/youth would like to participate in the following activity:

Activity _________________________________________________________________

Description ______________________________________________________________

Date and time of activity ____________________________________________________

Leaders _________________________________________________________________

Cost _________________________________________________________________

Method of transportation ___________________________________________________

Additional information _____________________________________________________

The church will provide the sufficient number of adult leaders based upon the number and age of youth attending the activity. If transportation by car is required, it will be provided by adult drivers. If the activity involves staying overnight out-of-town, a separate form will be attached.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact
_______________________________________ at ____________________________.

Youth’s name __________________________ Youth’s cell phone # _________________

Address ___________________________________________________________________

Parent or guardian’s name __________________________________________________

Best phone number to reach you ______________________________________________

Emergency contact ___________________________________ Phone _______________

Special instructions _____________________________________________

Parents: Does your child’s/youth’s Medical Release Form need updating?

☐ Yes
☐ No

By signing my name below, I give my child/youth permission to participate in the activity listed above.

Parent or guardian’s signature _____________________________________________

Youth’s signature ________________________________________________________

Date _________________________________________________________________
Incident Report

Name of youth __________________________________________________________

Home address __________________________________________________________

City, State, and Zip Code ________________________________________________

Telephone # _______________________          Date of birth _______________________

☐ Male          ☐ Female          ☐ Gender non-compliant

Name of parent/guardian _________________________________________________

Home address __________________________________________________________

City, State, and Zip Code ________________________________________________

Telephone # __________________________

Name of second parent/guardian (if applicable) __________________________

   Home address _________________________________________________________

   City, State, and Zip Code ______________________________________________

   Telephone # __________________________

(1) What is the nature and extent of the abuse, injury or accident? Include specifics such as date, time, and location.

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________


Continued on next page
(2) What are the circumstances under which the reporter became aware of the incident?
(include witnesses)
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

3) What action has been taken thus far by the reporter?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

4) Please give other information which you think might be helpful in establishing the cause of the
incident/or the person responsible for it. If known, please provide the name(s) of the alleged
perpetrator(s).
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Signature of reporter  ________________________________________________
Printed name  _____________________________________________________
Date  ___________________
Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28
Self-Care

Recognizing Stress and Burnout

Definitions
All people who work with human beings on a daily basis at one time or another may experience stress or burnout. Stress is the result of having to deal with too many crises that break the balance we have in our lives. Burnout can produce exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout is the result of our inability to deal with stressful situations in our work, in our lives, or in our family life.

Crisis
Life brings with it certain levels of crisis. (For the purpose of this document, the word “crisis” refers to high-stress events, both positive and negative.) The two main classifications of crisis are developmental and accidental. A developmental crisis is one that is produced by our own maturation. Such events include marriage, birth, graduation, retirement, new jobs, and other changes that are part of the life cycle. Accidental crises, on the other hand, include sickness, accidents, surgery, moving, unemployment, and/or natural disasters. Both types of crises produce stress in our lives. If we are not able to deal with the levels of stress produced by various types of crises, burnout can result. Psychologists and psychiatrists agree that stress is cumulative. When you keep adding too many crises together, the level of stress increases and the ability of the person to cope is diminished.

Youth ministry leaders are continuously dealing with different types of crises in their work environment. Just a message from a volunteer stating that they can not be present for a ministry commitment creates a certain level of stress if the ministry team is not functioning well. If parents are complaining, then stress is created. How much stress a person can handle at a particular time depends on how well equipped that person is and what support is available and utilized by them.

Let's look at the previous example. When the youth ministry leader receives that message and knows that there are other people they can count on, the level of stress is reduced. On the other hand if there is nobody that they can contact at the last minute to fill in, it creates a stressful situation.

Potential Sources of Stress
- How many hours a week do you work?
- Do you see your work growing and your time shrinking?
- Who is in charge? To whom do you report?
- What kind of relationships do you have with your colleagues?
- What are the things you do not like to do, but are expected of you?
- Do you feel well compensated for the work you do?
- Who cares about your work?
- What are the sources of support for your work?
- How do you balance your work with your family life and your leisure time?
- What support do you receive from your Conference, Association or national offices?
- How do you renew your skills?
- How do you adapt to or resist change?
These and many other questions can help determine if the situation you work in creates levels of stress that can lead to burnout. Stress is dynamic and can change from one moment to the other. However, burnout is a sense of failure that is more difficult to deal with because it radically diminishes coping mechanisms.

**Signs of Burnout**
- Are you frustrated with your ministry situation?
- Do you think you are at the end of your rope?
- Do you feel emotionally drained?
- Have you lost the passion for your ministry?
- Do you care what happens to the participants?
- Are you having problems relating to other people?
- Do you feel everybody blames you for what is wrong and nobody recognizes what is right?
- When you wake up in the morning, do you dread going to work?
- Do you feel that you are pounding your head against the wall?
- Has your health been affected?

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you are a candidate for burnout. But this does not necessarily mean you are at the end of your rope. There is hope.

**Steps for Dealing with Stress and Burnout**
- Take a break. Create distance between yourself and the situation. Take time for spiritual renewal through prayer and biblical reflection.
- Explore and identify the situations creating stress. Try to boil down the problem to just the specifics. What is going on? What is the real problem or situation? Break down the problem into its parts.
- What resources do you have available to help you deal with the particular problem? Consider personal strengths, a problem solving process, and communication skills.
- Identify the problem or situation. Define all the possible alternatives, evaluate the alternatives and choose the best options, and act on them.
- Celebrate the value of personal relationships and the support network you have. Take time to seek support and other points of view. Contact your Association, Conference or national office for networking and support, particularly your Southern New England Conference Faith Formation Team: [https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team](https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team). Your Association of United Church Educators Regional Representative is also a good source of support ([www.AUCE-UCC.org](http://www.AUCE-UCC.org)).
- One of the strengths of human beings is to learn from our mistakes or our challenges. Take time to articulate in writing what you have learned. These learnings can be helpful in a future situation.
- God will not abandon you. Pray. God will provide you with the peace, patience, and endurance to work through those situations that create stress and burnout in ministry.
Resignation or Dismissal

You love what you do. You love being a youth ministry leader. However there are times when a person needs to move on, and there are times when a church needs to move in a different direction. Separation can take two different forms — one is resignation from the position; the other is termination by the employer. Each one requires a different approach.

**Resignation**

Resignation is considered a voluntary action. Changes in personal circumstances, the discovery of incompatibilities with the persons you work with, or marked theological differences that make you uncomfortable are possible issues leading to your resignation.

The issue of separation is a stressful one to deal with, even if you are resigning on good terms. You have developed special relationships with people in the congregation, staff, children, youth, and adults. What should you do?

Create opportunities to express your feelings to those who will be missed. Provide some kind of closing, perhaps during a service of worship, or the congregation may want to have a special reception for you. An Exit Interview (see the following pages) is a process that many churches find helpful for allowing each party to share thoughts and learnings, as well as joys at the close of your time together. Events like this help in the separation process with all concerned. Once you leave a position, ethics requires you to respect the church's new beginning without you.

If resignation is provoked by particular situations in the work environment, and you feel that the best way out is by resigning, you should be honest. Learn from your experience. It may be time to make an assessment of yourself and set new goals.

**Dismissal**

The other type of separation is dismissal by your employer. This type of separation creates high levels of stress for all involved.

Questions to assess your situation:

- Were there any early signs that termination might happen? Did your evaluation show possible signs of dismissal?
- Was there an unusual amount of criticism about you and your work? If so, how did you respond?
- Were your relationships with other staff members deteriorating?
- Were there major theological or philosophical differences between you and the congregation and/or the staff?
- Was the church cutting staff because of reduced financial support or other budgetary losses?
- Do you feel the dismissal was unfair, or you have been mistreated?

**Dealing With Reality**

Responding to some of these questions may help you put reality in perspective. Do not jump immediately to conclusions before you have examined the total context of the situation. Try to get
some responses from the pastor, your supervisor, the youth ministry committee or the church board. An Exit Interview (see the following pages) with church representatives can be helpful to you and the church.

**Face Your Feelings**
Whenever dismissal occurs there are a lot of feelings on both sides. You may feel anger, bitterness, guilt, confusion, loss of identity and low self-esteem. Remember this type of news creates imbalance in your life and emotions need to be addressed in a healthy manner. Remember to be intentional in retaining your professional demeanor.

An unexpected dismissal can create financial setbacks, loss of health insurance, separation from loved ones, and can threaten your personal stability in many different ways. Refer to your contract. What does it say about termination? Does it guarantee any type of compensation in such cases or continuation of the health insurance for a reasonable time? Be sure to check if you are eligible for unemployment.

**An Ethical and Professional Response**
You will need to maintain a professional attitude when interacting with your peers, colleagues, and the people in your congregation after your departure. Realize that, like you, the congregation needs to move forward, and any disruptive conversations or actions that arise out of unresolved anger or stress will not be helpful for either party. The Southern New England Conference Faith Formation Team ([https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team](https://www.sneucc.org/faith-formation-team)) can help you work through any pain as well as offer guidance in working through issues that you or the congregation may need to address. (If you are ordained, your Committee On Ministry can help in this way.)

After your final day of employment, it is customary, and wise, to discontinue contact with the members of the congregation (this includes social media). This will help them to make a smooth transition to a new youth ministry staff person. If you are a member of the congregation you served, you will need to have discussions with the pastor and church leadership as to how you will continue to function as member, particularly when a new youth ministry staff person is hired. As difficult as this could be, it may be possible that both parties will determine that you seek membership in another church. In either case, speaking the truth in love will be the best course of action, followed by a decision or compromise that will best serve the congregation.

**Planning Your Future**
Your next step is to take responsibility over your life. Life must continue. This is not the end of the world, although it might seem like it to you now. These are some of the steps you can take:

- Pray
- Do something good for yourself.
- Make an assessment of yourself and your personal resources.
- Set continuing education goals, if needed.
- Find support from people doing the same type of ministry.
- Do not let your bitterness sever relationships with people closest to you.
- Take steps to promote your spiritual growth.
- Prepare new goals for your ministry and your life.
- Update your resume or Ministerial Profile.
- Develop a network leading to your next position.
- Try to learn the most you can from this temporary setback.
- Trust God. Trust in the One that can lead you forward.
Exit Interview

This process may be revised or adapted to your individual circumstances and church context as necessary. Remember that an exit interview is a time for mutual reflection, not evaluation or a time to emphasize negative experiences. Yet it may be helpful to the church to hear the departing individual speak honesty and openly about challenges, both professional and personal in nature, without judgment.

It is recommended that two or three gather to listen and reflect with the youth ministry leader. It would be important for the Chair or representatives of the youth ministry committee or board and either Personnel or Pastoral Relations Board or Committee to be present, as well as an individual of the departing staff member’s choosing — invited for support and to listen in.

Opening Prayer and Candle Lighting 5 minutes

Moments of Reflection 20 minutes (Choose 3-5)

1. Who or what has blessed your ministry here?
2. What were the greatest joys or high points in this work?
3. What were the greatest challenges or low points in this work?
4. How have you known God’s presence in this work/ministry?
5. What do you celebrate about your work or what gave you great satisfaction?
6. Is there an accomplishment you’d place first on your resume or Ministerial Profile?

Moments of Review 20 minutes (Choose 4-6)

1. What enhanced your working relationships here? (With staff, committee members, etc.)
2. What hindered your working relationships here? (With staff, committee members, etc.)
3. Which job responsibility was most rewarding? (In what way or why?)
4. Which job responsibility was most difficult? (In what way or why?)
5. Do you have recommendations to make to the congregation regarding the scope of this work?
6. Would you add/delete any tasks or responsibilities?
7. Was the work adequately resourced and supported?
8. What, if any, changes or improvements would you recommend that might be particularly helpful to the person that will be hired as the next youth ministry leader?

Closing Prayer 5 minutes
A Post-Pandemic Addendum

You must be holy in every aspect of your lives, just as the one who called you is holy.

1 Peter 1:15
Post-Pandemic Youth Ministry

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 created a major shift in the way that congregations provide youth ministry and faith formation programming for their teens. Some congregations found virtual ministry to be as effective as face-to-face, yet others struggled to maintain relationships with their teens. Given that the culture of every congregation is different, imitating the success of one congregation’s youth ministry can in no way guarantee that it will work in every congregation.

A guiding question for this time can be, “At this point in the life of our congregation, what will be the most effective way to minister to our teens?” And how can we be faithful leaders and mentors as we fulfill our congregational and baptismal commitments to making disciples of Jesus for the next generations?

A few learnings from the pandemic may help to guide this discernment:

We have learned that we actually are able to shift from analog to digital ministries. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed many congregations out of their comfortable “pews” and into the digital ministry world practically overnight. We went from face-to-face worship, fellowship, mission, and faith formation activities to Zoom-ing just about everything, diving into online communication modalities, and leaving many of our hands-on materials behind. We went from analog — utilizing physical space and materials — to digital — communicating, teaching, worshipping, and connecting online. Now we are shifting to planning for hybrid ministries — engaging in our traditional congregational activities and practices both physically and digitally in order to reach as many as possible, in order to make all abilities, ages, and individual preferences welcome, no longer leaving anyone out.

We have learned that gathering face-to-face is not necessarily needed for connecting. Connecting with each other is key to fostering healthy relationships. And we found ways to connect and maintain our relationships during the pandemic without needing to be in the same room. The critical importance of relationships actually has research behind it. Search Institute (https://www.search-institute.org/) is a research organization whose most recent research projects have been focused on relationships. Their concluding statements based on this research are, “Nothing — nothing — has more impact in the life of a child [teen] than positive relationships,” and “It’s not programs that change people, it’s relationships.”

We have learned that family matters, perhaps more than we were previously aware. As congregations, we can continue to support our families (which come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and configurations) through fostering intentional connections between our programming for teens and the support of their parents. Parents (as well as grandparents and other caregivers) will always be the primary vehicle for passing on the faith, and one way we can offer them much-needed resourcing is by including them on a regular basis in our offerings for the teens as we foster those relationships.

The adolescent years provide a challenge to the church, particularly when we try to use ministry models that were created for a different era and a different teen culture. Yet one thing remains the same — a focus on the interpersonal relationships in Christ that are fostered with the teens — with and among the teens themselves, with their youth ministry leaders, and especially with the other generations in the congregation. From Zoom games to prayer, from service projects to online resources — the goals for youth ministry are the same as always — to walk alongside our teens on their spiritual journeys.
Youth Ministry Resources

For our recommendations of websites, blogs, curriculum materials, events, mission opportunities, and books on youth ministry, visit

https://www.sneucc.org/disciples
and scroll down to “Youth & Young Adult Discipleship”