

Youth Ministry in Classis Huron – Leaders Retreat – September 9-10, 2022

Friday Evening opening

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Friday Evening Panel

- 4 speakers – 2 former youth directors, one current youth director and one student leader
- 3 questions:
 - What does a Christian Community look like to you?
Make God known – celebrate – a community of discipleship – family
Christ-centred – shouldn't be separated – inclusive – generational
In personal relationship with God rather than within the church
Neighborhood vs. community – I have the opportunity to be a light in the darkness
Love as the identifier of community – structure and history are less important
 - If you attended worship as a child or teen, did you feel like you belonged? If so, why? If not, why not?
Needs to be a 2-sided relationship
The subject matter didn't touch me – outside my experience
Beyond being a member of the group – need personal relationships
Mentorship – even if you leave/move away – you are still connected.
 - How might the previous answers impact youth ministry from a local church space or a Classis space?
3 elements for successful youth ministry: relationship (mentor), solid biblical teaching, evangelism or the opportunity to share your faith.
Youth Pastor as professional friend
Intergenerational models organically create mentorship relationships.
Creative Youth Ministry: needs both structure and variety, impact beyond just Sunday morning
Empowering youth – youth matter
Authentic volunteers with a passion for ministry

Saturday

Opening verse: 1 Samuel 3 – the story of God calling Samuel – Eli in a mentorship role

Contextual Analysis – what is going on in the world at this time at:

- International level
 - War in Ukraine
 - Queen Elizabeth RIP
 - Political Polarization
 - Divisive Viewpoints
 - Pandemic
 - Food Insecurity
 - Affects of media – social media/fake news/etc.
 - Loneliness and disconnection
 - Calls for Justice
 - Indigenous
 - Race
- In Canada
 - COVID guidelines and limits
 - Ottawa demonstrations
 - Personal vs. corporate perspective/viewpoint
 - Indigenous issues
 - Mental Health
 - Less division between Church and State
 - Struggling health care system – privatization of many things
 - Regional difference
 - Demographics (aging out)
 - Inflation
 - Me too!
 - Legalized marijuana
 - Cancel culture

- Addictions and opioid crisis
- In our denomination, Classis and Church
 - Taking our politics to Church
 - Post Christian Reality
 - LGBTQ2S+
 - Women in Ministry – Patriarchal Society – 25 years of women in ministry in CRCNA
 - Decrease in Church attendance particularly of young adults
 - Passion of young people for the church
 - New Space/opportunity as a result of the pandemic
 - Disability ministry – inclusive and equipping
 - Intergenerational separation leads to challenges
 - COVID – hard on leadership
 - Less theological growth – related to less catechism
 - Many denominational resources
 - Decrease in volunteerism and increase of demands on volunteers
 - A need to develop and acknowledge gifts
- In Youth Ministry
 - Attendance challenges – getting youth to come out
 - Less youth in current demographic
 - Partnering with other Churches in Youth ministry – denominational and other – co-operation vs. competition
 - Discipleship model needs to be long-term, no metrics, results driven – youth are hungry for those connections
 - Youth ministry operates in a financial reality – paid staff vs. volunteers
 - Youth ministry as a community task not just select few – part of our commitment at Baptism
 - Be careful about ideological division – remember what unites us.

What will Youth Ministry in Classis Huron look like if we are living into God’s vision for us?

Top categories.

1. Giving God 100% Control
2. Access to Resources
3. Networking amongst Churches in Classis
4. Churches on Fire for Youth and Youth are inspired to remain in Churches and become full members
5. Discipleship as a continuum – mentoring from a young age and beyond youth group*
6. The current moment is one of new spaces/opportunities*
7. Vibrant and meaningful youth group*

*these categories were further discussed in a blocks/barriers exercise

5. Discipleship as a Continuum					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discipleship defined as support, connection, guidance on a relational side throughout life ● Equipping with meaningful conversations 					
Underlying Block/Obstacle	How it Blocks	What it Blocks	How can we address these Blocks	Why is it Important	Goals, Outcomes, Strategic Direction
No congregational follow-through or commitment	We can't achieve what we have not planned for	Relationships – others, self, God			
Lack of intentional teaching, discipling, equipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear of unknown ● Lack of awareness, knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growth development ● Succession ● Not part of church life 			
Lack of resources for formation for certain groups	Creates animosity and a us vs. them mentality	Meaningful engagement between groups			
Segregated learning by age groups (not interest/ability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Separates and divides ● “Othering” 	Deep meaningful community development			

Lack of transitional support when milestones are reached (college, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People left out • Feeling of abandonment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration in to full life as a Christian • Loose youth 			
Lack of meaningful gift development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow comfort zones • Stifles creativity 	The space to find yourself and be who/what God has called you to be			
Lack of opportunity for youth to take ownership of their formation journey					
Not willing to leave our comfort zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to try new things • Less resilient • Scared of the unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning, growth, creativity • Resilience • New experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate a safe space • Encouragement • Know/trust each other • Openly acknowledge that it is hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the church • Build up Youth • Build resilience • Learn to love self and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join committees • Invite into spaces • Have the youth identify the places that the Church can be pushed
Stop-Start structure of programming					

6) Move into new spaces and opportunities

- new space created by recent COVID crisis, etc.
- what does it mean to do life together?
- Space to counter culture
- Being on mission together
- Meet students where they are at

Underlying Block/Obstacle	How it Blocks	What it Blocks	How can we address these Blocks	Why is it Important	Goals, Outcomes, Strategic Direction
Fear of Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps us in the box • Doesn't allow growth • Creates opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth • Creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and educate • a willing and open spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • called to nurture each other • pursue God's justice and peace in all aspects 	
Lack of Capacity	Stunts progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • passion • growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training opportunities • build vision so people will step up • share experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empowering people in service to His mission 	Bridge the gaps by sharing experiences and generating resources
Disagreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separates churches • creates tension • different agendas • stops networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unity • relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share conflict mitigation techniques • commit to communication and respect 	Unite us	
Apathy	Ignorance – people don't care enough to know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • passion • networking 			

7. Building a vibrant youth group - Discipleship

- Be part of the group – everyone belongs
- Safe space- to doubt, question, guide, big conversations
- Responsive and adaptable teaching, authentic
- Counter cultural: soc. Media, time management, relationships, community, setting an example
- Creative – enhance church with energy
- Place for community kids
- Strong Theological foundation

Underlying Block/Obstacle	How it Blocks	What it Blocks	How can we address these Blocks	Why is it Important	Goals, Outcomes, Strategic Direction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Disconnecte d • By soc. Media, lack of friends, fake relationships 	Disconnection from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group cohesion • Lack of personal support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and educate • a willing and open spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • called to nurture each other • pursue God’s justice and peace in all aspects 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of safety judgement • insecure leaders • smothering parents • ability to ask questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited sharing • fearful to ask 	Prevents growth in faith and relationships			
Inaccurate stereotypes of youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labels • meaningless tasks • unwelcoming environment • misguided expectations/assumptions 	Fails to appreciate youth and reduces their passion and gifts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safe spaces to explore and experience the church • Support youth in their development 	Model community and lead by example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster interest in out-of-the-box thinking • Classis involvement • Youth leadership positions within Church structure
Insular – no community within Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stops growth and connection • No mentorship of youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth are not engaged in church and cannot impact it in a positive way • Youth seek support and community elsewhere 			
Lack of Christ-centred theological discipleship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consistency and intentionality • Lack of knowledge/ability to share scripture can confuse youth • Lack of volunteers • Unskilled volunteers are overwhelmed if gifts are not present • Huge time commitment • Becomes a “job” rather than a passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks youth development and foundation building • Blocks outreach to community youth • Gifts aren’t used to the fullest extent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful teaching and time to disciple and build • Consider training or paid staff 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training opportunities • Leadership retreats and workshops • Youth leader “Day of Encouragement”

Goals/Outcomes/Strategic Direction

Youth Ministry within Classis will focus on:

1. **Giving God 100% Control**
2. **Classis sponsored networking and shared passion for youth**
 - Knowledge of sources and expertise
 - Classis Youth Champion
 - Shared experiences, learning and prayer
3. **New approaches to youth ministry**
 - Youth as a priority, recognized as the future of the Church
 - Discipleship as a continuum, starting early and beyond youth group
 - Vibrant and meaningful youth group within our congregations
 - Equipping youth leaders