

Youth Design Day

A Guide for Facilitating a Youth Group Design Workshop



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Overview

Starting a youth group can be a daunting task. This guide is designed to help you through the process using proven principles we call Youth Design Day. Here you will find outlines, guidelines, and examples you can use when creating your own Youth Design Day in your church.



Here are the important steps involved as you plan for and kick off your event.

1. Prior to the event day, meet with the Rector to discuss overall goals for the program. This ensures the needs of the church are understood and incorporated and that the final program design aligns with those needs.
2. Plan a pre-event meeting with representatives of the youth and their parents to get their input and perspective. Always keep in mind that a key goal of the program is to have the youth involved in planning and creating a program they can be excited about because they have ownership in the design from the outset. And when parents are included, they will have confidence in what their children are involved in and be more supportive.
3. Also plan to meet with adult sponsors before the event. Help them understand their role in the initial design event, as well as their ongoing role guiding and helping the group to grow. Be sure to review the Design Day agenda and schedule with them.
4. On the day of the event, be sure to have the following:
 - A comfortable space with tables and chairs and plenty of space to move around.
 - Flip charts and plenty of colored markers.
 - A dry-erase board, if available
 - Snacks!
5. Have everyone briefly introduce themselves, along with an interesting fact, hobby or interest.

6. Have a short ice-breaker activity planned to kick things off and help everyone get more comfortable. One example is included in the Sample Agenda. Here are links to others.

<https://spirituallyhungry.com/youth-group-icebreakers/>

https://rootedministry.com/youth-minister-approved-icebreakers-for-conversation-around-the-dinner-table-or-in-the-car/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw_e2wBhAEEiwAyFFFo4euWcZEq6TcWrWCJsoRwhL2UsenuQg4F6GkAvG5c2M6LgA-a4iySBoCyVYQAvD_BwE

7. The sample Agenda and Schedule gives you a framework to keep the day moving along. Allow for some flexibility and adaptability depending on the responses and involvement of the youth but stay on schedule as much as possible.
8. Emphasize participation from everyone. Mention as often as necessary that all their ideas and contributions are important and welcome. There are almost always a few shy ones in the group, and you may need to take extra care to make sure they feel included. Encourage members of the group to help each other out.
9. By the end of the session, be sure you end up with these three key elements:
 - An action plan of next steps.
 - Assignment of who will be responsible for each of those steps. (Try to have each person in the group be involved in making those next steps happen)
 - A timeline for when these things will happen.
10. Follow up! Before concluding, set a time for the next meeting of the group. It is important not to lose the momentum from the day!

Top Five Traits of a Good Facilitator

These five facilitator skills can help ensure the day runs smoothly and productively:

1. **Adaptability and Decision-Making Skills:** The ability to adapt and make decisions "in the gap" is critical. This involves adjusting the agenda on-the-fly based on the group's energy levels, engagement, and unforeseen challenges, ensuring that the day's objectives are met while accommodating the spontaneous needs and ideas that arise.
2. **Empathetic Communication:** The facilitator must be skilled in empathetic communication to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. This involves actively listening to participants, validating their contributions, and encouraging quieter members to share their ideas, ensuring everyone feels valued and heard.
3. **Creative Facilitation:** Given the creative and collaborative nature of the day's activities, from mind mapping to design thinking workshops, the facilitator needs to be creative in guiding discussions, stimulating creativity, and keeping energy levels high. This includes employing various facilitation techniques to inspire participation and innovation.
4. **Organizational Skills:** With a tight schedule covering a range of activities, the facilitator must have excellent organizational skills. This includes time management to keep sessions within their allocated slots, preparation of materials, and smooth transitions between activities to maintain focus and momentum throughout the day.
5. **Strategic Focus:** The facilitator needs to keep the session strategically focused on the day's goals while allowing for creative exploration. This involves guiding the participants to ensure that the ideas developed are aligned with the church's vision and objectives, making sure the day's outputs are actionable and relevant.



Sample Youth and Parent Pre-Design Day Meeting

Name of Church or Organization

Interview Guideline for Assessing and Aligning Youth Understanding of Episcopal Themes

Purpose: To understand the current perspective of youth and parents regarding key Episcopal themes, ascertain alignment with rector's vision (the goal of what we want the youth to design toward), and gather data to inform the development of a youth-led program for confirmation preparation.

Interview Structure:

Introduction for Interviewer (5 min)

- Introduce yourself and your role in the congregation.
- Explain the purpose of the interview clearly.
- Reassure confidentiality and the non-judgmental nature of the discussion.
- Encourage honesty and reassure that all views are valued.

1. Opening Questions (5 min)

- Warm-up to build rapport. Ask about their general experience with the church and what they enjoy about being part of the community.
- Word association: church, faith, discipleship

2. Key Themes (15 min)

- Relationships: "Can you tell me about a time when you felt a strong sense of community or connection at our church?"
- Exploration: "What are some big questions about life or faith you wish you could talk more about at church?"
- Confirmation Readiness: "What does confirmation mean to you, and what would you like to gain from the process?"

3. Three-Legged Stool Approach (18 min)

- Scripture
 - "In your own words, what do you think the Bible represents for us as Christians?"
 - "How do you see the role of the Bible in understanding what it means to be a Christian?"

- Tradition
 - "What are your thoughts about what it means to be an Episcopalian?"
 - "How would you describe the significance of the Prayer Book in our worship and life?"
- Reason
 - "Could you share a personal experience that shaped your understanding of God?"
 - "What questions do you have about your faith journey that you would like to explore?"

4. Confirmation Specifics – if Applicable (5 min)

- "Imagine we're designing a new confirmation program. What topics or activities do you think should be included?"
- "What could make confirmation preparation a meaningful and fun experience for you?"

5. Closing (2 min)

- "Is there anything else about your faith or experience in the church that you'd like to share?"

Concluding the Interview:

- Thank the participant for their time and thoughts.
- Explain the next steps and how their input will contribute to the ideation day and program development.

Guideline Criteria for Interviewer:

- Maintain a conversational tone throughout the interview.
- Listen actively and ask follow-up questions based on their responses.
- Take notes during the interview or, with permission, record the session for accuracy.
- Be mindful of non-verbal cues and show empathy to build trust.
- Prioritize questions based on the flow of the conversation; flexibility is key to eliciting authentic responses.

This guideline is structured to first build a connection, then delve into each of the three legs of Episcopal understanding as outlined by the rector. It concludes with questions designed to draw out ideas and personal reflections relevant to the upcoming confirmation and ideation day.

Sample Meeting Outline for Group Sponsors

Name of Church/Organization

Youth Ministry Focus Group

Date

Purpose of the focus group: *to gain some insights about what they understand “discipleship” and “Christian formation” to be.* This will inform further research and new ideas during the brainstorming session on Saturday.

Note: As a moderator, don’t make declarative statements. Probe further (“can you give us an example?” “Would you explain further?” “Please describe what you mean” “I don’t understand”) Don’t ask why (rather, “what prompted, influenced, made”). Spend most of the time in the key questions. Remember that they all have wisdom, respect that. Be fully present. Repeat back what you heard. Put the key notes on flip chart. Use the 5-second pause. Use neutral responses such as OK, Yes, or Uh-huh. Avoid “correct” “that’s right” or “excellent.”

Before (or over lunch)

- Welcome each; make them feel important.
- Nudge toward conversation over lunch.
- If possible, encourage short stories...“say more”.

“We’d like to hear from everyone – we’d like to make this into a conversation, and it is okay to build on what others say or to present a different point of view.”

- Who is making the best music today?
- What makes something an “experience”? (something worth talking about and that might change how you see life.)

Finish with a mind map

- “Youth Ministry” at the center. Then attach lines as thoughts come to mind about the topic. Ask to describe. Which line is most important?
- What are the important things we need to remember about this topic?

Note: look for the **dominant talkers**. Seat them next to you. “Thank you, John. Are there others who want to comment on the question?” Or “Does anyone feel differently?” Or “Claire, you look like you want to say something.” With **ramblers** put down your pen and discontinue eye contact after 20 seconds.

**Consent and right to stop

GROUP QUESTION ROUTE

Opening question (QUICK) 3 mins

1. Tell us your name, how long you have been at _____, and what you most enjoy when you're not _____.

Introductory questions (QUICK) 3 mins

2. How did you learn of the youth ministry here?
3. How do you participate in youth ministry here?

Transition questions (SLOWER) (10 mins)

4. Think back to when you first became involved in the youth ministry. What were your first impressions?

Key questions (spend MOST of the time here) (40 mins)

5. *How do you define "discipleship"?
6. *What is Christian formation to you?
7. *What are some church stereotypes (bad image or opinion)?
8. Are you any different because you participate in the youth ministry?
9. What do you like about the youth ministry here?
10. What *don't* you like about the youth ministry here?

Ending questions (SLOWER) (10 mins)

11. If you had a chance to give advice to the youth minister about how it should be run, what advice would you give?
12. We want you to help us evaluate the youth ministry here. We want to know how to improve this ministry and what difference it makes in your lives. What did we miss? Is there anything we should have talked about but didn't?

Sample Analysis of Youth and Adult Interviews

Thematic Analysis of Interviews for Youth Design Day

Name of Church/Organization

Number of Participants

Date

(Number) interviews were held. Description of who was interviewed ie: youth/age, parent, Rector, etc. The aim of these interviews was to set the foundational groundwork to engage youth in creating a program that resonates with their understanding of key Episcopal themes, aligns with the rector's vision, and encourages readiness for confirmation.

The **Interview Guideline** document provided a framework for gathering insights from youth about their experiences and thoughts on church community, faith, and the "Three-Legged Stool" approach (Scripture, Tradition, Reason) to inform the development of a youth-led program.

The **Youth Design Day Plan** emphasizes a collaborative and interactive session where youth can ideate and develop a church program. It details various structured activities such as mind mapping, World Café discussions, and a design thinking workshop aimed at fostering creativity and actionable outcomes in line with the rector's goals.

The congregation's primary aim is to understand the current perspectives of youth on Episcopal themes, ensuring they resonate with the rector's vision, and to use these insights for developing a youth-led confirmation preparation program. The interviews here analyzed reveal themes related to growing in faith and ideas for prompting youth to create their own group.

Themes

1. **Inclusivity and Welcome Environment:** Parents appreciated the church's inclusivity, finding it welcoming and open, contrasting it with previous experiences they had that were more conservative and non-inclusive. This theme underlines the significance of a church's atmosphere in fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance.
2. **Seeking a Safe Space for Exploration:** One parent expressed a desire for a place where their children could ask "big questions" in a safe environment, implying a need for programs that allow youth to explore their faith and doubts freely.

3. **Desire for Active Engagement and Meaningful Participation:** Parents want their children to be actively engaged and participate in church activities. They value the church as a place for their children to grow in faith through engagement, service, and being part of a larger community.
4. **Faith as a Personal Journey and Growth:** Parents discussed their personal growth in faith since joining the church, noting how the church's progressive nature aligns with their values and helps them grow in their beliefs without feeling in conflict.
5. **The Significance of Confirmation as a Personal Choice:** There's a consensus that confirmation should be a decision that the youth make with a clear understanding of its meaning, emphasizing the role of the church in providing adequate preparation for this sacrament.
6. **Family and Faith Practices at Home:** Parents shared various practices they engage in at home, from bedtime prayers to discussing theological concepts, indicating the importance of faith in their family life. Yet the youth do not currently participate.
7. **Education and Understanding of Scripture:** There is an expressed interest in better understanding the Bible and being able to apply its teachings to contemporary life, suggesting a need for educational programs that make Scripture accessible and relevant.
8. **Questions and Doubts:** Parents expressed a willingness to explore lingering questions about faith, showing an openness to continued learning and discussion, which could inform programs that encourage open dialogue about faith and doubts.

Based on these insights, a clear suggestion for the overarching goal of the Youth Design Day should be the **creation of a youth program that prioritizes (1) inclusivity, (2) encourages active and engaged participation, and (3) allows for open-ended exploration of faith.** Such a program would provide a safe environment for youth to ask questions, express their doubts, and learn about their faith in ways that resonate with their experiences and the values of their families.

Sample Design Day Agenda and Schedule

Youth Design Day Plan for Youth Program Development

Name of Church/Organization

Date

Purpose: To facilitate an interactive and collaborative session where youth can design their own church program aligned with the rector's goals.

Priority number one is that the youth build relationships, get comfortable, and that the church becomes a place where they can explore big questions.

Duration: 3 hours plus lunch

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboards or large poster boards
- Markers, sticky notes, and index cards
- Timer or stopwatch
- Comfortable seating arrangements
- Snacks and beverages

Session Breakdown:

1. Introduction (15 minutes):

- Welcome and introduction of facilitator.
- Participants briefly introduce themselves and give one fun fact/interest/hobby about themselves.
- Ice-breaker activity to set a collaborative tone.
- Recap of the rector's goals and findings from the interviews.
- Explain the objectives for the ideation day.

2. Warm-Up: Mind Mapping (30 minutes):

- **Objective:** To generate a broad spectrum of ideas related to the three-legged stool approach: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.
- **Method:** Divide participants into groups. Each group works on a large poster board. In the center of each, write one of the themes identified during the Thematic Analysis meeting with parents, youth, and pastor, then branch out with ideas, thoughts, and questions.

- **Instructions:** Encourage creativity and free flow of ideas without judgment. Have them write down as many ideas about what they think the theme means as they can. There is no right or wrong! After 10 minutes, rotate the groups to a different poster board to build on the previous group's ideas.
- **Inclusion:** This is a group, not an individual activity. Encourage them to help each other out and emphasize that everyone's contribution is important.

3. Deep Dive: World Café (1 hour):

- **Objective:** To facilitate deeper conversation and understanding of each theme.
- **Method:** Arrange the room with multiple tables, each dedicated to a theme with questions from the interviews. Participants will discuss and note ideas on tablecloths/paper.
- **Instructions:** Participants spend 20 minutes at each table, this time with a facilitator guiding the discussion. Encourage detailed discussions that lead to **actionable program elements**. Facilitators will summarize key points and ensure that all voices are heard.

Break (15 minutes):

- Rest and refreshments.
- Recap the day to this point.

4. Design Thinking Workshop (45 minutes):

- **Objective:** To focus on specific, actionable program ideas.
- **Method:** Introduce the design thinking framework. In their groups, participants will define problems, suggest solutions, and start to create rough prototypes of program elements.

Instructions:

- (15 minutes) **Define:** Clarify the key challenges or needs based on the earlier discussions.
- (15 minutes) **Ideate:** Generate a range of solutions. For example, use techniques like asking each participant to write down six ideas in six minutes. Then each participant picks their best idea and pitches it to the group. The group then votes on the best overall idea.
- (15 minutes) **Prototype:** Create simple, visual representations of the ideas using drawings or role-play. Encourage everyone to contribute.

5. Gallery Walk and Feedback Session (30 minutes):

- **Objective:** To showcase and refine the program concepts.
- **Method:** Groups set up their prototypes around the room. Everyone walks around, observes, and places sticky notes with feedback.
- **Instructions:** Encourage constructive feedback focused on how each idea aligns with the rector's goals and the participants' interests. After the walk, groups review feedback and discuss potential improvements.

6. Closing and Next Steps (15 minutes):

- Group reflection on the day's activities and the ideas generated.
- Discuss how these ideas will be taken forward, including potential timelines and responsibilities. Find leaders among the youth.
- Conclude with a vote or survey on the most popular ideas to prioritize them for implementation.
- Clearly define what the next steps will be to accomplish the selected ideas, and who will be responsible for moving each forward.

Remember – be flexible! The group may go in a different direction than you planned. As long as they stay in the guidelines of the agreed-on vision, that's OK!

6. Lunch (plus going over time)

Post-Ideation Day:

- Compile the results and feedback.
- Create a summary document outlining the proposed youth program.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting to initiate the implementation of the top ideas.

Throughout the ideation day, it's essential to maintain a balance between guided activities and creative freedom. Encourage participation from all attendees and ensure that the session remains focused on the rector's vision. The detailed instructions for each activity will help keep the day structured while allowing for organic idea development.

Sample Registration Form

Church/Organization Name
Youth Ministry Focus Group
Date

Registration Form

WELCOME! We are glad you are here!!

Name: _____

Age: _____ Grade _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone _____

Do your parents know you are here? _____ Yes _____ No

You have the right to stop and not participate at any moment. Simply raise your hand and say that you wish to be excused. You are in complete control over your participation here today.