

Awakening the Call

A Guide for Educators, Youth Leaders, Pastors and Church Leaders to help young people discern a call to ministry



Suggestions It is not unusual to find talented, vibrant and amazing young people in the church. In this current cycle of ministry and scope in the church young people are becoming more visible, vocal and integral to church leadership and mission. More churches are calling young people to serve in active and official ways. They are called as elders, deacons, teachers, committee members and support staff. Their presence leads us to believe that they might be hosting an internal sense of God's will and direction . . .

a call to ministry in the church. This paper is a simple guide for church leaders a guide for conducting a conversation with a young person who might be considering or even not considering but showing potential for a call to church leadership. Conversation can happen informally and this is a gift! For some young people, however, it is appropriate to draw attention to the importance of the conversation by following a process such as the one outlined below.

Three simple steps

Step I: The Invitation

- 1. A written contact with a verbal follow through.** Send a letter (with a copy to the young person's parents) indicating your observations of the gifts and talents, citing tangible examples of how you have seen this young person practicing their faith and potential call. Indicate in the letter that you will be following up with a phone call so that you might set a time and place for meeting.
- 2. Follow up with a phone call.** Use that call to find out if the young person is willing and/or able to meet with you. To clarify WHY you would like to meet (it is

highly likely that this will be the first time a young person has heard the language of call and vocational ministry. Some more explanation as well as a verbal outline of what you'll talk about together will help her/him feel more comfortable.

- 3. Choose a public location to meet.** A coffee house or restaurant might be a comfortable physical location for a young person. It is important that the two of you be visible to other people a public location rather than your office would be best. Set the date and time and length of time with the young person.

Step II: The Meeting

Here is a suggested flow for your conversation:

1. Thanking the young person for meeting with you.
2. Explaining again what you are talking about. For helpful information regarding Call and Vocation you might explore www.exploreministry.org
3. Ask the young person if they have any questions about the basic definition and experience of call.
4. Share with the young person what you have seen in them (in terms of actions, experiences, conversations, etc . . .) that lead you to talking with them.
5. Ask the young person if they have ever considered a call to ministry? Is this a new concept? A familiar concept? A weird concept?
6. You might consider sharing briefly your call to ministry. It is helpful with a young person to remember the following things in sharing your stories:
 - ¥ Be brief and concise
 - ¥ Share what was strange, challenging and hard for you. Share what has been life giving, a privilege, a joy. Share what it FUN. Share how it is that you make a difference.*

* These are critical questions that young people ask about any situation: Isn't it fun? Will it be meaningful? What are the hard parts?

¥ Be truthful about the full call process (working for the church vs. attending church) (servant leadership vs. self promotion) (etc . . .)

7. Ask them for their reactions? Questions?
8. Ask them if they have any thoughts about what you've talked about?
9. Tell them that you will continue to be there if they want to talk. That you are willing to revisit this as they move through high school and college. Check to see if they might be interested in ongoing conversation and prayer. You will probably have a sense of this during your conversation. Ask the

young person if they might be interested in an ongoing check in?

10. If there is a special event or gathering offered consider accompanying the young person (perhaps with a small group of young people and/or parents) to this event.
11. As a closing prayer share with the young person what you are grateful for in knowing them? An open eyed prayer might be helpful. e.g. Amy I am grateful to God for your willingness to listen. For your spirit. For the way in which you serve our congregation and God in that serving . . .

Step III: Follow Up

1. Following your visit with the young person contact their parent(s) and let them know how the meeting went. Offer some observations without breaking confidentiality and personal connection with the young person. This meeting is, after all, about their journey and call. Let the parent know that you have offered to continue to pray for their child and that you have offered further support and council. Let them know that you will be following up the visit with a note to the young person.
2. Send a note, a card or a letter to the young person. Thank them for taking the time. Reaffirm your offers for support, prayer and conversation. Let them know how you will be praying for them (once a week, throughout the month, each time you see them . . .).
3. Periodically check in with that young person particularly if they have moved on to college or a career. Schedule a lunch with them, a coffee break annually. Choose a particular day and set that aside as Amy day for prayer and let Amy know that you are praying for her.

Important Issues to Consider

- ¥ A person's call might be to non-ordained ministry. It is critical to share the full view of ministry.
- ¥ Seminary might seem like a strange, bleak place to a teenager. Don't hesitate to give them a brochure or two of a particular theological institution that you would recommend.
- ¥ When recommending theological education keep in mind the particular needs and gifts of the young person. While your alum might have been a good place for you to begin your theological education the needs (whether they be financial, geographic, pedagogical) of the person you are advising might lend themselves to another institution.
- ¥ Suggest other people for the young person to get in touch with, to observe, to work with (campus ministers, youth directors, presbytery staff people).
- ¥ Encourage them to remain active in the church as they move into college! Try new ways of worship, mission and education.

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