

Insert Area Code Here

The PC(USA) is a connectional church. But what does that mean to the youth in your congregation? Bring our connectionalism to life by partnering with other PC(USA) congregations in your area code. In many church youth groups, activities revolve around four areas: service, recreation, worship, and study. Here are a few ideas for organizing local gatherings:

Night of Service

Choose local agencies to serve. For each agency, choose a project that youth can complete during the youth-group hour. During this multigroup gathering, have stations that youth can rotate through in 15–20-minute blocks. Activities should engage them in learning whom the agency serves, what services are provided, and how someone can seek assistance. Activities might include postcards to missionaries or members of the military, baking brownies or cooking a meal for a family in need or a residential facility, assembling snack packs of nonperishable items (granola bars, bottles of water, raisins, etc.) to pass out to people in need, collecting and organizing books or clothing for at-risk children or schools, and so on. Youth may travel from station to station with their youth group, or you may want to separate them by grade, nametag colors/numbers, or schools they attend.

Game Night

Meet at the church with the largest outdoor campus or at a local park. Before playing a game, lead groups in organized get-to-know-you games. Consider organizing groups by middle school and high school or odd and even birthdates. Once you have split everyone into smaller groups, facilitate an icebreaker (knots, would you rather, two truths and a lie, or some other game). Give groups face paint, duct tape, glow-stick bracelets, or bandanas as a way to designate their players. Create a group identity or group name. Encourage the members of each group to know the names of their teammates before moving to the playing field. Play an outdoor game like capture the flag, Indiana Jones, manhunt, or minute-to-win-it, or set up a challenge course.

Study and Reflection

You may want to look at a topic that will enhance your night of service by using clips of a documentary on homelessness or hunger. You may want to address an issue facing youth in your community by having a local politician, police officer, school administrator, or member of an advocacy group speak to the large group. You may want to use a children's movie or book to introduce a topic: perhaps *The Lorax* to reflect on the environment or *Horton Hears a Who!* to talk about those we marginalize. Allow time for small group discussion and gather together to share reflections. Here are a few questions you may want to ask: How does this issue affect our community? Is there anything we, as youth, can do? What does our faith lead us to do? How can our church be involved? How can our congregations work together to address this issue? Close by reading Micah 6:8 and ask the youth to name what the Lord requires of us as a community.

Best Worship Service Ever

Read a short Vespers service together. Include youth from each congregation in reading prayers and leading liturgy. At the end of worship, mention that there is an improv group with lots of resources to make regular events better. Watch the YouTube video “Best Game Ever” (improveverywhere.com/2008/04/07/best-game-ever). Discuss what elements of the game were elevated by the improv group’s efforts. Did the team play better? How did the fans react? With that in mind, break into groups and ask youth to brainstorm ideas for making the best worship service ever. Encourage them to write down the ridiculous along with the realistic. Come back together to share these ideas. This is an opportunity to talk about what makes a quality worship service and what elements of worship point us to God, along with the elements that can distract us from worshipping God. Challenge the youth to take some of these ideas and lead a presbytery worship service, a service before a community walk, or an ecumenical holiday service.

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