

Promenade

An intergenerational event for zoom or in-person

Have you ever heard a song and been transported back to a specific event or place? Or have you looked at a photo of yourself from your high school years and immediately recalled the sights, sounds, and smells of that day? Music and photos can conjure up stories and memories that make for meaningful connections between youth, their parents, and other adults in the congregation. Rather than having youth merely ask an older adult in the church or their parents about their own high school experience, why not have fun using photos and music to relive some of those experiences together?

Using the Prom theme, here is a fun way to engage the adults in the congregation in sharing their stories with youth. If it isn't Prom season, you can call this something different and still ask for any fancy dance photos. This event can be done as either an in person or a zoom gathering. In either case, about a month before the event ask your youth, their parents, and members of the congregation to send you a photo of them at their Prom or a high school dance. Along with the photo, have them include the following: where their high school was located, the year the photo was taken, and their Prom song or a popular song they remember being played at the dance. Even if people don't think they will attend the event, they can still submit a photo and information for use in the event's activities.

This event should be an entertaining evening for the youth in the congregation, helping them to get to know their parents and some other adults in the congregation in a new way. Remember to invite college students and young adults, as well as older adults and young parents. Think of things to make this accessible, light-hearted, and engaging for multiple age groups:

- Create a funny "Prom-posal" inviting the congregation to participate. This may mean your youth make a video or use photos asking people to be "their date" for the event. If there are people in a retirement community or a nearby campus ministry who you want to invite, send them an invite or poster in the mail.
- Encourage folks to attend the event in festive wear.
 - **If the event is in-person**, you may want to ask people to come in dresses, gowns, tuxes or suits or they may just have a fancy scarf, boa, or hat as a nod to the theme.
 - **On zoom**, folks can do the same, as well as find a thematic background.
- Gather music from various decades. Using songs that people sent you with their photo, as well as researching some other dance songs from that era, is a great way to set the tone as people are gathering together in-person or electronically.
- Have food that is typical of the occasion: punch, appetizers, some sweets.
 - **On zoom**, encourage folks to make their own version of "church punch" by mixing 2 parts apple or cranberry juice with 1 part ginger ale and a scoop of sherbet.
- "Sign My Dance Card if": "Having a "Dance Card" is a blast from the past, but update it by asking people to sign your card if they ____: had a corsage or boutonniere, stayed at the dance until the last song, had a date for the dance, bought something new for the dance, borrowed something from a friend or a parent for

the dance, went to the dance in their school gym, were on the dance committee to plan the dance, danced at the dance, have a good memory of the dance, were glad when the dance was over.

- **If you are in-person**, have these updated Dance Cards at tables where you have intermingled designated seating for youth and adults. Or hand these out as people enter and have them mingle getting others to sign their cards.
 - **If you are on zoom**, you can do this in the whole group by having people electronically raise their hands if they would say yes to that question. As you get to some of the more interesting questions, you could ask if anyone was willing to share more about their answer. Or you could put a combination of youth and adults in break out rooms to talk about their answers.
- Name that Tune & The Decade of the Dance: This will use the same music that you gathered from people as their Prom Song. You may look up some additional dance music of the years that people who sent in photos would be familiar with - of course, sprinkled in with songs your youth suggest from their own experiences. Play the song and have people guess what the year was and what the name of the song is.
- **In-person**, you can do this like a game of trivia with a table collaborating. Or as individuals and the first person to raise their hand or hit a bell has the chance to guess.
 - **On Zoom**, have people put their answers in the chat function. Everyone who guessed the decade, or the year gets a point. If you could also name the song, two points!
- ** Be aware of timing. 8 songs may be about enough. At the end of this section, you might ask who had their Prom song played. Then give folks a chance to say which was theirs and what other song they remembered dancing to that evening. If people are at tables, this could be done in these small groups for a few minutes. Or on zoom, you could go into break out rooms for a few minutes.
- What style! What grace! But who's that lovely face? Guess Who? Game: Using the photos you collected, create a PowerPoint that you project and ask people to guess who is pictured in each photo. Some people may be obvious while others may be big surprises!! You should be sure to show everyone's photo who sent one in. If people send in more than one photo, consider putting those on one slide. Also, be sure to mix up decades of people.
- **In-person** if you are playing this like a game of trivia, you can have a grouping of people collaborate for answers. Or as individuals and the first person to raise their hand or hit a bell has the chance to guess. You might also have a piece of paper and pen for each person and have them write their answers and then check to see if they are correct at the end.
 - **On Zoom** have people put their answers in the chat function & award one point for every correct guess.
- Don't Make a Scene! Prom scenes in movies trivia. It is amazing how many movies feature Prom scenes: Back to the Future, It's A Wonderful Life, Carrie, Grease, Pretty in Pink, Perks of a Wallflower, Blockers, Footloose etc. If you haven't run out of time (and depending on the number of photos sent in, you may) and want to continue the trivia fun, create a PowerPoint with a still shot scene from a variety of these movies and ask folks to collaborate to guess the movie. Can they also name the characters? This might be a time to partner a young person or two with an older person. Be sure to find some movies that are familiar to a variety of generations.
- The Last Song or a way to end the evening: If you have done the guessing elements of the evening like a trivia game, you might announce the winners. While you tally up who has the most points, ask people to talk about their Prom experience. Depending on your numbers, this could be done in break out groups on zoom or as a whole group discussion. In-person, this should be done at tables or in pairs or trios with a young person matched with an older person. Question prompts might include:
What do they remember as the most fun, most anxiety producing, best thing about what they wore, worst thing about what they wore, how were they asked to the dance, or did they ask someone or go in a group?
Whether you are in-person or on zoom, end the evening by announcing the trivia winners - maybe crown them! Prom Royalty. Then teach some dance moves that people can do sitting down and play a fun "close

it out” song like, “I Had the Time of My Life” by Bill Medley. You could even do this as an echo dance where you do a move and then folks copy it. Doing the moves sitting down allows you to do this for multi-ages, abilities and whether you are on zoom or in-person. Doing the whole song might get long, but at least go through the first chorus.

Note: There is work to do before this event in order to make it successful: creating the playlists, PowerPoints, sending invites, gathering a variety of age groups to participate, having props on hand. The most important element of this evening is the fellowship and conversation between youth and adults. Though a school dance is a fun event, the dialogue and the relationships that will begin to form open the door to future conversations of a more serious nature. As you are thinking of timing, using the photos people took the time to send in is probably the main activity beyond conversation. Be sure to allow space for enjoying the photos and allowing people to share some stories. As you watch people interact, you may note the groups, the discussions, the follow up that could be done with these same adults. Consider a youth meeting where young people share something they learned about the adults they talked to with the rest of the group. What are other questions they would like to ask those same adults about their high school experiences? What are things that seemed so different or so similar to their own?

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