

THE YOUTH MINISTRY & SPIRITUALITY PROJECT

CHARTER

The *Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project* was formed in 1997 to participate in the renewal of youth ministry in the Christian church. Its mission is to *foster Christian communities that are attentive to God's presence, discerning of the Spirit and who accompany young people into the way of Jesus.*

Our mission is founded on the biblical vision of the human person who is created in the image and likeness of God and whose deepest longing is for communion with God and others in love. In response to Christ's invitation to abide in him (John 15:4), we believe that the central purpose of youth ministry is to open the minds and hearts of young persons to an intimate relationship with God in Christ through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We seek to fulfill our mission through retreats, workshops, training events, written materials, and relationships that promote a *contemplative* approach to youth discipleship. The contemplative approach to youth ministry is based on a Christian community's commitment to cultivate attentiveness to God's Presence in the lives of young people and is supported in the following seven ways:

1. **SABBATH.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry is grounded in a Christian community committed to the sacred balance between work and rest. Just as Jesus led a life of simplicity with times for rest, solitude and silence (Mt 14:22-23), we also are committed to helping Christian communities find rest and balance in a hyperactive culture. A life that honors Sabbath rest helps us to be more in touch with our heart and soul, more aware of the Spirit of God and more available for relationships of love. Youth blossom in the midst of adults who know how to savor life through a Sabbath rhythm of rest, work and play. Companions of the Project seek to maintain this simplicity and sacred balance in their own lives and ministry.
2. **PRAYER.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry is rooted in desire for intimacy with God in Christ through a life of prayer. Just as Jesus' life and ministry were grounded in a desire to be in complete union with God (Mk 6:46; Jn 17:1ff), we also seek to ground all life and ministry in a prayerful relationship with God in Christ. We practice and teach many forms of prayer but are particularly committed to regular periods of *contemplative* prayer in order to be healed, inspired and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. Contemplative prayer invites us to attend to God's mystical presence dwelling silently within the depths of our hearts opening our whole being to ongoing conversion and freeing us for an ever-deepening awareness of that Presence in all persons, things, and events of our lives. Companions of the Project seek to practice contemplative prayer with scripture each day as well as at regular times with their community.
3. **COVENANT COMMUNITY.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry is practiced within a covenant community of Christian disciples. Just as Jesus called and ministered with others in a community of spiritual companions (Mt 10:1-4), we also encourage, support and practice small covenant groups who sense a common call to spiritual growth through Christian living and ministry to young people. These groups offer prophetic witness to a way of life that is creatively resistant to the seductions of the market culture and the dullness that can inhabit Christian institutions. Companions of the Project commit to meeting regularly in covenant communities for sharing, prayer, scripture study and discernment in the service of their ministry to young people.

4. **ACCOMPANIMENT.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry is focused on discipleship through the accompaniment of young people. Just as Jesus sought to form disciples through a relationship of love and an invitation to follow Him (Mt. 4:18ff), we also seek to initiate young persons into mature Christian faith through relationships with elders who join them in living the way of authentic discipleship. Young people are searching for spiritual guides who are alive in Christ to help reveal to them their deepest identity and beauty as beloved daughters and sons of God and to assist them in discerning their unique gifts and vocation in the service of God's reign. Companions of the Project seek to be compassionate elders in the faith who seek out regular accompaniment for themselves and who actively model the disciplines, virtues and fruits of the spiritual life. They offer youth friendship, guidance and listening hearts as they make the passage through adolescence into spiritual maturity, "to the measure of the full stature of Christ."
(Ephesians 4:13)
5. **DISCERNMENT.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry is guided by discernment. Just as Jesus prayed to know and follow God's desire (Lk 22:39ff.), we also seek to discern and respond faithfully to the call of the Holy Spirit in our lives and ministry with youth. We practice and teach the disciplines of individual and group discernment so as to be fully available and responsive to the movement of God's grace in our covenant communities, allowing anxiety-driven youth ministry to become Spirit-led youth ministry. Companions of the Project seek to learn and practice the spiritual disciplines of discernment as the basis for opening, listening and responding to God's call in youth ministry.
6. **HOSPITALITY.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry seeks to welcome, bless and joyfully integrate all young people into the whole church community. Just as Jesus exhorted his disciples to "let the children come" (Mk 9:35ff; 10:13ff), we also seek the full inclusion of young people and the many gifts they bring into every dimension of church life: worship, teaching, proclamation, fellowship and service. Young persons often suffer marginalization in the church and the pain of not feeling accepted and appreciated for who they are. As elders in the covenant community, adult companions of the Project seek not only to accompany young people individually on the way of Jesus, but also to advocate for them in finding their place as fellow ministers of the gospel in the larger community of the church and its mission in the world.
7. **AUTHENTIC ACTION.** A contemplative approach to youth ministry seeks to engage youth and adults in authentic actions that reflect God's mercy, justice and peace. Just as Jesus came out of prayer and solitude to heal the sick, welcome the outcast, and celebrate with friends (Lk 4:18-19, John 12:1ff), so we also seek to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in a way of life rooted in the Beatitudes that witnesses to Christ's love, passion and joy. Communal practices of Sabbath, prayer, discernment and accompaniment find their fulfillment in actions with youth that make visible the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Young people desire opportunities to participate in Christ's healing and liberating activity within the world. Companions of the Project seek to support youth and adults in becoming instruments of God's grace who courageously resist the principalities and powers that oppress life and creatively reveal the reality of God's love.