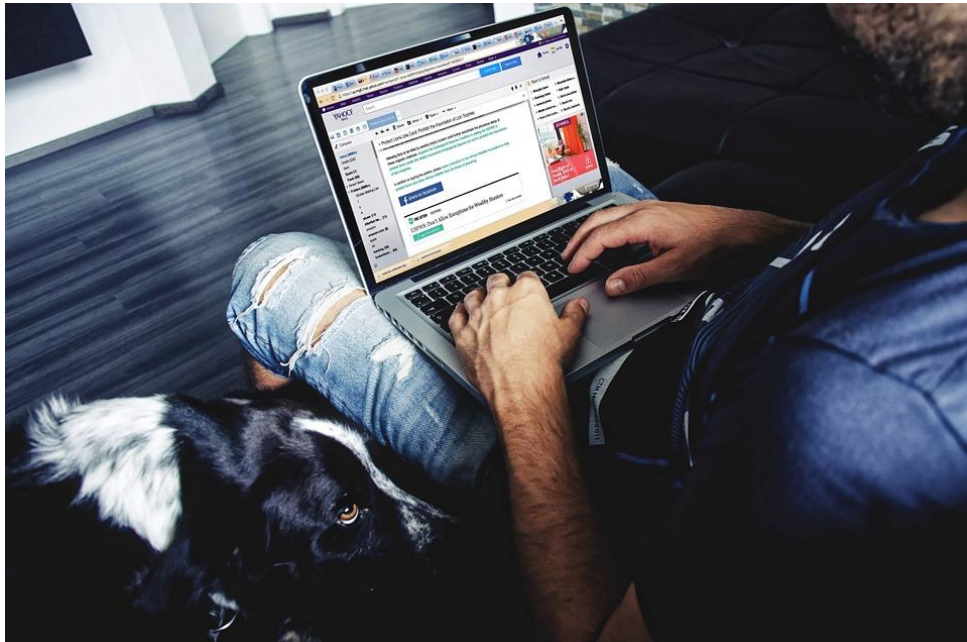


Basic Youth Leader Resources and Information



By Debbie Kolacki of
PRC – Practical Resources for Churches

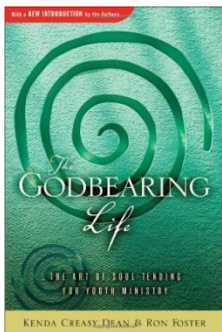
Introduction

In putting together this booklet, I asked youth ministers, publishers, and church leaders what they thought were the best resources for those in youth ministry. I'm familiar with many of the resources myself and some of them are available at our PRC offices. The suggested resources come from a variety of theological backgrounds, so you may have to adapt them for your church's theology.

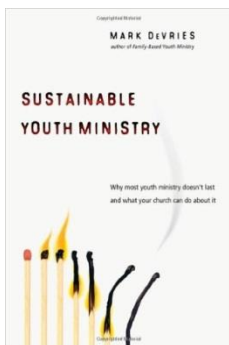
Many of the non-digital resources mentioned were published some time ago. (Some of the suggested books are even out of print but are available from third party sellers on Amazon and other websites.) It seems that fewer physical resources are being published today, as digital resources are cost-effective and can be updated easily.

If you are aware of any resources, old or new, digital or physical, which you think would be helpful for those in youth ministry, feel free to email me. My email address is debbie@prcli.org.

Basic and general resources – books



First, let's talk about some basic and general resources for youth ministry. When I looked at the feedback I got from those involved in youth ministry and publishing, there were two books that were recommended by a number of people as essential reads. The first one was [*The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*](#) by Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster. It was first published in 1998 and a new edition of it came out in 2005. It emphasizes that youth ministers are called to be pastors to their students, not just recreation directors. It puts relationships before programs -- relationships with other people as well as a relationship with God. Youth leaders are called to minister to young people facing emptiness in their lives and offer them something different from the secular world. Kenda Creasy Dean has written a number of other books about youth ministry.



The other book which was highly recommended is quite different from *The Godbearing Life* but complements it nicely. It's called [*Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*](#) and it's written by Mark DeVries. In noting how often youth ministers burn out or move on, he gives practical advice on creating a sustainable youth ministry by providing tools and structures to lay a strong foundation, which isn't built on a person or a current trend. He discusses creating a realistic job description for a youth pastor, tips for hiring a youth pastor, equipping youth pastors to build a strong volunteer team, navigating church politics, and more. DeVries has

written many other books about youth ministry and is the founder of [Ministry Architects](#), a consulting team that works with churches to build sustainable ministries for children, youth, young adults, and families. He is also a cofounder of the [Center for Youth Ministry Training](#).

In an article titled [“Okay, You’re a Youth Minister. Now What?”](#) Randall Curtis, Developer for Youth Ministries for the Episcopal Church in Arkansas, suggests that new youth ministers pray regularly for their youth and families; listen and observe for at least a year; be available to begin relationships with the youth, their families and the entire parish; put together a calendar of events; and read *The Godbearing Life, Sustainable Youth Ministry*, and [Call on Me: A Prayer Book for Young People](#) by Jenifer Gamber and Sharon Ely Pearson.

Here are some more basic and general books about youth ministry.

- [Family-Based Youth Ministry](#) by Mark DeVries
- [Contemplative Youth Ministry](#) by Mark Yaconelli
- [The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry](#) by Roland Martinson
- [Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry](#) by Doug Fields
- [Purpose Driven Youth Ministry](#) by Doug Fields and Rick Warren
- [Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry](#) by Andrew Root
- [Leaving Home with Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of our Youth](#) by Elizabeth Francis Caldwell
- [Presence-Centered Youth Ministry](#) by Mike King
- [Jesus-Centered Youth Ministry](#) by Rick Lawrence
- [Missional Youth Ministry: Moving from Gathering Teenagers to Scattering Disciples](#) by Brian Kirk and Jacob Thorne
- [One Body : Integrating Teenagers into the Life of Your Church](#) by Sam Halverson
- [Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry](#)
- [Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition: Practical Ideas to Nurture Long-Term Faith in Teenagers](#) by Kara E. Powell, Brad M. Griffin and Cheryl A. Crawford
- [Sticky Faith Teen Curriculum with DVD: 10 Lessons to Nurture Faith Beyond High School](#) by Kara E Powell and Brad M. Griffin
- [Not the Same Old, Done-it-before Youth Meetings](#) by Tim Ferguson
- [Thriving Youth Groups: Secrets for Growing Your Ministry](#) by Jeanne Mayo



Basic and general resources – websites

There are many websites with resources for youth ministry. Here are a few that were recommended.

lifelongfaith.com – This website has information about lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations. The Lifelong Faith Journal is a free download and there is a [collection on adolescent faith formation](#) with articles from various issues of the Lifelong Faith Journal.

youthworker.com – There are articles and resources about many areas of youth ministry.

studentministry.org – This website has a blog, videos, podcasts, and resources to purchase.

fervr.net – This site has articles, reviews, and videos for Christian teens.

[Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com) – This is a great site to look for ideas for activities for youth ministry.

Here are some additional youth ministry related websites:

- youthpastor.com
- thesource4ym.com
- youthministry.com



Basic and general resources – publishers and denominations

Group/Simply Youth Ministry

Group was a magazine started in the days before computers to share ideas and activities related to youth ministry. Eventually [Group Publishing](#) came into being and now they publish not only youth resources, but also resources for children and adults. Simply Youth Ministry is now a part of Group Publishing. Some people love Group's resources' high-energy activities, but other people find their resources shallow. I heard from a number of youth leaders who said they have to adapt Group's resources to fit their theology. Group leans more to the evangelical viewpoint than a mainline theology.

From the youth section of Group's website:

- Youth Ministry Curriculum
- Bibles, Books, & Devos
- Youth Group Lessons and Sermons
- Youth Group Games & Media
- Discipleship Resources
- Leader Resources
- Volunteer Resources

Group also offers courses and a certification in youth ministry.

[Youthministry.com](#) is a website run by Group. You can subscribe to have articles and "freebies" sent to your email address.



Youth Specialties



[Youth Specialties](#) offers a blog, job postings, and events.

Abingdon

[Abingdon Press](#) is the publisher for the United Methodist Church and offers a number of products for youth. Their products can be purchased through Cokesbury which sells United Methodist resources as well as resources from a number of other publishers.

[Canvas](#) is for high school teens and explores the theological beliefs and foundational concepts of the faith. In five four-week studies, students learn from history, tradition, and the Bible. The studies are designed for students to lead the lessons themselves.

[Fathom](#) offers 18 4-session studies that explore the Bible book to book.

[Groove](#) is a Bible study series for teens that “invites teens to learn the essentials of their faith, own their story, and engage the world in serving Jesus.” Each topical study has four sessions and up to 48 weeks are available.

[Linc](#) is a timely resource to help teens examine relevant faith and life issues using the latest music, movies, news, and current events. It downloadable or you can have it sent to you by e-mail.

[Spice Rack](#) is a downloadable Bible curriculum for middle school and high school students.

Sparkhouse



[Sparkhouse](#), the ecumenical branch of Augsburg Fortress, the Lutheran ELCA publisher, offers youth resources.

Their [re:form series of products](#) includes the original re:form program of 40 lessons which uses creative and funny videos to tackle questions about the Bible, creeds, disciples, Jesus, other beliefs, and hot topics. Two of the questions from the program are “Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?” and “Can I be a Christian without going to church?”

Re:form Ancestors also uses fun videos to help youth get to know personalities from the Old and New Testaments.

Re:form Traditions has four sessions and is available in Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed versions. It covers their history, beliefs, and practices to help youth discover how their faith tradition came to be.

All the re:form curriculums include DVDs, leader guides and student anti-workbooks.

[Echo the Story](#) helps youth experience the biblical narrative through storytelling, creative reflection, and dialogue. It's available in both 12-session and 36-session versions and includes DVDs, leader guides, and student sketch journals.

[Colaborate: Bible Study](#) is based on problem-based learning which allows students to discover for themselves the richness of the Old and New Testaments.

[T.B.D. \(Think. Believe. Do.\)](#) covers several topics and helps youth unpack, understand, and live out their faith.

[Wholeness & Holiness](#) will guide students to explore and correct common misconceptions of biblical purity.

Leader Resources

[LeaderResources](#) is a publisher with Episcopal roots and they offer [resources for youth ministry](#), including some [free downloads](#).

[Making It Real & Relevant](#) is a multimedia, topical Bible study for 7th-12th graders. It's lectionary based and downloadable by annual subscription. A topical version recommended for younger youth is called [God Talks!](#)

Leader Resources also publishes the [Journey to Adulthood \(J2A\)](#), a complete youth ministry program of spiritual formation for 6th-12th grades. It encourages relational ministry and uses Bible study, prayer, rites of passage, outreach ministries and both serious and playful activities. J2A is a downloadable resource offered to churches and schools on an annual membership basis.

Denominational resources

Most denominations offer youth resources and many host youth events. The ELCA has their own [youth web page](#). They also offer [Faith Lens](#), a free, downloadable weekly Bible study for youth and young adults which links a current news story with scripture texts. The [ELCA Youth Ministry Network](#) "strengthens and empowers adult leaders of children, youth and family ministry in service to Christ."

The United Methodist Church has a [website for ministry with young people](#) and a [Facebook youth ministry page](#). They also offer [certification](#) in youth ministry.

The Episcopal Church has a [Youth Ministries page](#). *My Faith, My Life: A Teen's Guide to the Episcopal Church* is written by Jenifer Gamber; there is also an accompanying [leader guide](#).

[PYWA](#) is the Presbyterian Youth Workers Association. The Presbyterian Church USA also offers a free resource for Middle School students called [Just Eating](#); it focuses on the relationship between faith and food.

Youth ministry training

[The Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton](#) offers youth ministry related degrees and a Certificate in Youth & Theology.

The [Yale Youth Ministry Initiative's](#) mission is to “promote adolescent faith and flourishing in a diverse and changing world by conducting scholarship, equipping leaders, and resourcing youth ministries in and beyond Christian churches.”

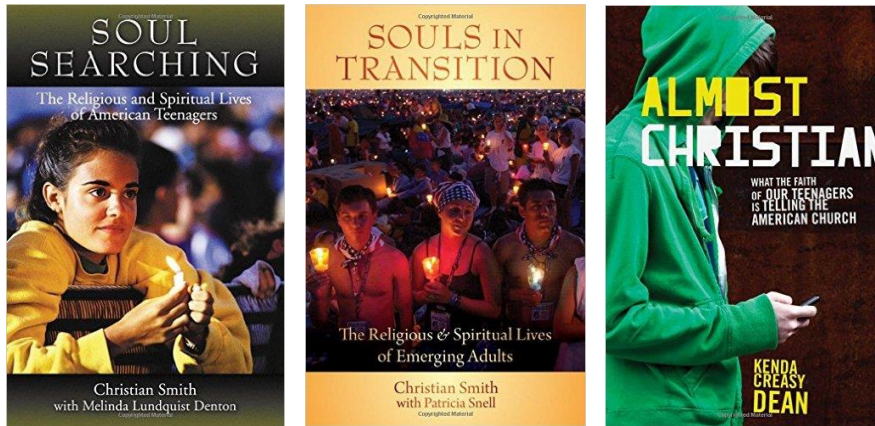
The [Center for Youth Ministry Training](#) offers a Master of Arts in Youth Ministry.

[Faith Forward](#) brings together children's and youth ministry leaders to “re-imagine children's and youth ministry through theology, relationship, and practice.”

[Youth Leader Training on the Go](#) written by Doug Fields offers youth leader training without in-person meetings. It includes both audio training sessions and training sessions on CD that can be emailed.



Youth culture research and information



[*Soul Searching*](#) by Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, [*Souls in Transition*](#) by Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, and [*Almost Christian*](#) by Kenda Creasy Dean are three books which came out of the [National Study of Youth and Religion](#) directed by Christian Smith which was “designed to enhance our understanding of the religious lives of American youth from adolescence into young adulthood.” Teenagers were followed from high school through college and into young adulthood. The first two books report on the data collected from the first six years of the study. The third book takes the data and looks at it through a theological lens. There is also a [*Soul Searching* documentary](#) DVD which features interviews with the books’ authors, youth pastors, and teenagers from around the country.

[*The Soul of Adolescence: In Their Own Words*](#) by Patricia Lyons offers “first-person accounts of adolescent ethics, spirituality, conscience, and struggles with despair.”

[*Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today’s Teenagers \(Youth, Family, and Culture\)*](#) by Chap Clark uses “solid research and years of insightful observation” to offer a look into the contemporary adolescent experience.

The Center for Parent/Youth Understanding offers a [website](#) to help parents, youth workers, educators, pastors and others understand and reach today’s youth culture.

[*The Merchants of Cool*](#) DVD was produced by Frontline and looks at today’s teenagers who are the object of obsessive focus by corporate America. This DVD explores the culture of today’s teenagers and how they view themselves and their parents.

Spiritual practices, retreats, devotionals, and worship

Some resources related to spiritual practices and youth include:

- [*Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*](#) by Dorothy Bass and Don C. Richter
- [*Soul Tending: Life Forming Practices for Older Youth and Young Adults*](#) by Beverly Burton and Drew Dyson
- [*Holy Things for Youth Ministry: 13 Practical Sessions*](#) by Brian Hardesty-Crouch
- [*Go Deep: Spiritual Practices for Youth Ministry*](#) by Doris E. Kizinna
- [*Words for the Journey: Letters to Our Teenagers about Life and Faith*](#) by Martin B. Copenhagen and Anthony B. Robinson
- [*Practice Spiritual Disciplines Youth Leader Guide*](#)

Two books about retreats are:

- [*Ready-to-Go Retreats & Lock-Ins*](#) by Beth Miller
- [*Go Deeper Retreats: 12 Life-Changing Weekends for Youth Ministry*](#) by Group Publishing

There are many devotionals for youth, both hard copies and online. Here's one book and a website.

- [*The Barefoot Way: A Faith Guide for Youth, Young Adults, and the People Who Walk with Them*](#) by Dori Grinenko Baker
- [*D365 Devotionals 365 Days a Year*](#)

Some worship resources to check out include:

- [*Book, Bath, Table, and Time: Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry*](#) by Fred P. Edie
- [*Worship with Teenagers*](#) by Eric L. Mathis

Mission and service projects

Your denomination may offer opportunities for youth to participate in mission and service projects. Many outside organizations also sponsor mission trip, such as these:

- [*Group*](#)
- [*Youth Works*](#)
- [*Adventures in Missions*](#)
- [*Youth with a Mission*](#)

World Vision's [*30 Hour Famine*](#) invites youth to fast together for 30 hours to raise funds to fight hunger. A free kit includes resources to educate and motivate students to fight hunger including an Event Guide, fundraising packets for each student, educational videos, and more.

Some books related to mission and service are:

- [*Unbound: The Transformative Power of Youth Mission Trips* by Jann Treadwell](#)
- [*Mission Trips That Matter* by Don C. Richter](#)
- [*Ready-to-Go Devotions for Mission and Service* by Mark Ray](#)
- [*Ready-to-Go Missions* by Jason B. Schultz](#)
- [*Ready-to-Go Service Projects* by Ann Saylor](#)
- [*Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* by David A. Livermore](#)
- [*Serving from the Heart for Youth Leader's Guide*](#) and [*Student Book*](#) by Yvonne Gentiles and Carol Cartmill – This is actually a study which helps youth discover their spiritual gifts and how they can use them in service.

Bibles and Bible studies

There are a number of teen Bibles available in various translations. Some of these are:

- [*The CEB Student Bible*](#)
- [*The Guidebook: The NRSV Student Bible*](#)
- [*NIV Teen Study Bible*](#)
- [*NIV Teen Devotional Bible*](#)
- [*Live Holy Bible New Living Translation*](#)
- [*Extreme Faith Bible CEV*](#)

[*The Story, Teen Curriculum*](#) uses DVDs to cover the Bible in 31 sessions.

[*Through the Bible in 12 Weeks from Group Publishing: 12 Lessons to Help Students Navigate the Big Picture*](#) by Jenny Baker is an experiential study of the Bible.

[*Enter the Story: 7 Experiences to Unlock the Bible for Your Students*](#) by Michael Novelli uses hands-on experiences to help students engage in and learn from the Bible.

[*Pocket Guide to the Bible: A Little Book About the Big Book*](#) by Jason Boyett uses humor to teach basics about the Bible.

[*What Did Jesus DO All Day?: Discovering the Teen Jesus*](#) by Felicia Silcox explores what life was like back in the time of Jesus. There are discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

Confirmation

Most churches use their denomination's confirmation curriculum, although there are a few nondenominational curriculums available.

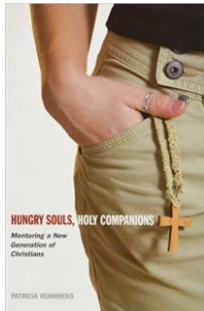
One resource for talking about confirmation in general is the book [*Signed, Sealed, Delivered: Theologies of Confirmation for the 21st Century*](#) by Sharon Ely Pearson. Although it's written from an Episcopal perspective, much of the information would be of interest to those in other denominations, such as the history of confirmation and the varying opinions on whether confirmation is still meaningful today.



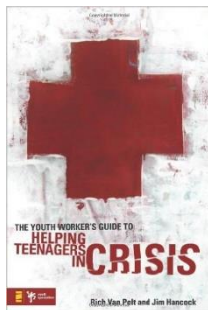
“[The Confirmation Project](#) seeks to learn the extent to which confirmation and equivalent practices in five Protestant denominations in North America are effective for strengthening discipleship in youth. These denominations include the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church in the USA, and the United Methodist Church.”

Some information from the project is available now and there are webinars and podcasts by researchers on the website. You can sign up to be notified of additional reports, publications, or conferences.

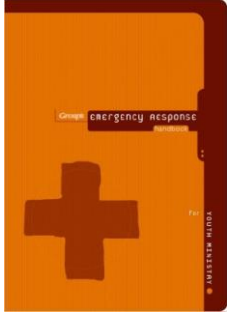
Counseling and mentoring



[Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians](#) by Patricia Hendricks gives advice on how to be a spiritual companion to young people and offers information on the spiritual needs of post-millennial young adults.



[The Youth Worker's Guide to Helping Teenagers in Crisis](#) by Rich Van Pelt and Jim Hancock suggests ways to respond to crisis, forge preventive partnerships with parents, schools, and students, and bring healing when damage is done.



[Group's Emergency Response Handbook for Youth Ministry](#) focuses on how to respond to twelve emergencies such as suicide, addictions, and destructive behavior.

Games and icebreakers

Group publishes a number of books about games. Two of them are [On the Spot, No-Prep Games for Youth Ministry](#) and [Best-Ever Games for Youth Ministry](#) by Les Christie.

Some of the youth ministry websites mentioned earlier include games along with other activities. The [EGADideas website](#) offers various activities and plenty of ideas for indoor and outdoor games. [The Source for Youth Ministry](#) offers games and icebreakers. There's also information about leading games and a special search tool which lets you select options for the type of game you're looking for.

Movies, videos and drama

The Source for Youth Ministry website suggests [clips for movies](#) to show youth along with a brief introduction and discussion questions.

Joel Mayward is the author of [Jesus Goes to the Movies: The Youth Ministry Film Guide](#) which includes 50 film discussion guides. He also writes film reviews and essays on [Cinemayward.com](#).

[GodTube.com](#) has Christian videos including music, inspirational, comedy, cute and ministry videos.

[The Skit Guys](#) provide Christian videos, church skits, plays, drama scripts, and other quality Christian church media for various prices.



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