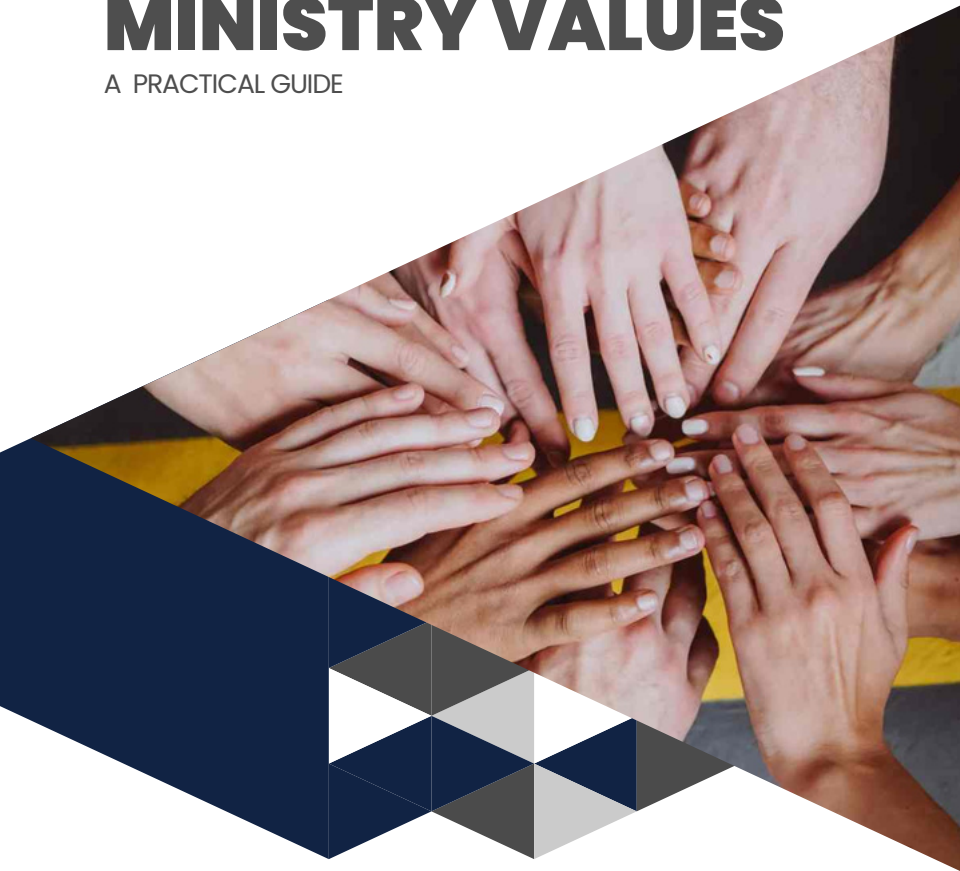


ESSENTIAL STUDENT MINISTRY VALUES

A PRACTICAL GUIDE



NEXT GENERATION
LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



INTRODUCTION

Values are like foundation stones in a cathedral. They take years to dig, lay, and set. If they are off, even by a fraction, the whole building is in danger. Like foundation stones, our actual values are often experienced more than advertised. Every aspect of a church, ministry, and leader embodies our deeply held values. They work in relation to each other to create stability, capacity, and guidance.

Values form the foundation of any leader's decisions, work, and impact. Spoken or unspoken, written or unwritten, the values of leaders and organizations matter. Not only do the nature and stability of these values matter, but the way they function to actively guide and hold leaders accountable matters.

Over the course of two years, the Student Leadership Network team worked to identify good initial values for any student ministry. As part of this process, the team gathered input from 10 different student ministry professionals, with over 120 years of combined experience. Please notice that these are starting points – kind suggestions for you and your local team to use to prompt discussion, arrive at clarity, and form your own consistently expressed and practiced values.

As you begin the work of discerning and naming student ministry values with your local church, please be aware of your own church's real guiding values, which are not always the same as the ones on your website or bulletin. In thinking about which values could serve any student ministry, we considered the value set of whole churches. It is our intent and hope that these values, or your variation on them, would confidently align with the values of your church.

Lastly, we do not attempt to name or define the value of being Anglican. We recognize that across our province we have many beautiful and faithful expressions of Anglicanism. We deeply trust, and honor, that each of our churches expresses and communicates Anglican values. These values, intended to live within and in submission to the whole church values, add important clarity for student ministries without being repetitive to the values of the whole church.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We have outlined these five values (plus one bonus value) in a manner that we hope invites you to explore, contextualize, and activate.

Each value is first named and defined.

This is followed by an exploration of the implications of this value, along with its scriptural roots. Neither of these aspects are meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive, but an invitation for you and your team to explore further.

Next, we provide discussion questions to help contextualize each value. You and your team are the local experts to frame, bring focus to, and discern how these values are lived in your context.

Lastly, we offer ways to activate each value. These actions, shaped by your context, can bring the influence and impact of all our values into the life of our student ministry.

As always, the Student Leadership Network is here to help you. Please connect with us at nextgenanglican.com/student-leadership-network. A strong starting point is taking our Student Ministry Assessment.



STUDENT LEADERSHIP NETWORK VALUES

The Gospel Story

Student Integration

Household Faith

Leadership

Purposefulness

Bonus: Your Student Ministry Leader



THE GOSPEL STORY

Definition:

Inviting students into the story of God's saving work in Christ under the authority and truth of Scripture.

Exploration:

It is our deep hope, even the cornerstone of our foundation, to invite young people to receive the gospel of Jesus. To see generations formed in the likeness of Christ requires a deep invitation into his life and light. This only takes place through the ministry of Jesus we receive in scripture and is only brought into fullness through the Holy Spirit.

We are confident that you share this value already. And we trust that it is already at work as a driving value in your church. However, restating or clarifying the value of the gospel story as a foundation stone to student ministry is essential. As a value, it helps us avoid the distraction of ministries that are entertainment based, event-centric, or merely social groups. Similarly, we value meeting young people with the gospel of Jesus, rather than with emotional manipulation, power dynamic pressures, or other equally inappropriate and ultimately ineffective tactics. It also helps us hold on to the importance of meeting young people who do not know Jesus while also attending to the discipleship and maturation of young believers.

While the whole of scripture attests to and is part of the gospel story, we notice it particularly in several passages: Psalm 91:14-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 53; Mathew 4:17; John 10; John 20:31; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:23-24; and Titus 3:4-6.



THE GOSPEL STORY

Contextualizing Questions:

What kind of language is best for your people? Does the term “story” resonate, or does another term work better in your context?

How would you express a value for both the invitational nature of the gospel and the transformational value of the gospel?

For your community, what would be the clear connection between the authority and efficacy of scripture within both evangelism and discipleship?

Activation:

Option 1: When teaching or asking students to find a passage in the Bible, include very short “stories” such as: “We are going to begin reading John Chapter 1. This is found in the second part, or testament, of the Bible. The first part, the Old Testament, is the story of how God is saving his creation through his people Israel. The second part, the New Testament, is the story of how God is saving his creation through his Son, Jesus. The whole Bible is the story of how God is saving his creation, even us.”

Option 2: When teaching about the meaning and practice of the Holy Eucharist, include the narrative of invitation to the feast that Jesus is hosting. Explain why we take certain postures, including hands held open to receive, as part of how a young person can say yes to Jesus’ invitation.

Option 3: Cultivate a story-telling practice among young people by regularly having the clergy, staff, and volunteers share their gospel story, especially focused on the experience of being invited into God’s saving work and how scripture was active in their response.



STUDENT INTEGRATION

Definition:

Embracing students as the church of today and incorporating them into the full life of the body of Christ.

Exploration:

It is nearly cliché within the church to say that youth are the church of today. Far too often this is stated without being actively considered. Research from the last 20 years consistently shows that the vast majority, over 90%, of adult Christians began their lifelong follow-ship of Jesus before they were 18. When our young people begin to respond to Jesus as his disciples, they need opportunities for both formation and contribution.

The church can often sideline young people unintentionally. This can send the message that church is really for children or adults, but not for them. Even the well-meaning practice of a “Youth Sunday” can result in students feeling like their faith is performance based and only matters in the church on that day.

Young people are looking to be contributors. They need to be embraced as real followers of Jesus, and they receive that, at least in part, by being offered opportunities even before they are “ready.” We remember that through the Old and New Testaments, and in the life of Jesus, people were often given the opportunity to express their faith and contribution before they were ready. Examples include Exodus 3:10-4:17; Jeremiah 1:7; Matthew 17:4; and 1 Timothy 4:12.



STUDENT INTEGRATION

Contextualizing Questions:

Where do you already live into this value? What would be one other area that would be a reasonable next place for young disciples to be incorporated?

As you think about your church community, to what extent are young people embraced? Are they unconsidered, sidelined, or integrated?

What other ideas or words would your church need to receive or welcome this value?

Activation:

Option 1: Rather than scheduling your youth ministry offerings during church or the sermon, invite students to receive the fullness of our Anglican worship. More research shows that the single most effective church ministry with youth is participating in worship alongside faithful adults.

Option 2: Which teams can young people join to contribute to the life of the church? While we often relegate students to technology, children's ministry, acolytes' ministry, and other generationally-considered roles, they are more than capable of serving in a variety of ministry areas. Invite young people into your church planting team, annual calendar sessions, and prayer ministries. Essential to this is empowering them to be full contributors.

Option 3: Begin to integrate young people into Sunday morning worship in new ways this fall, perhaps as readers, communion servers, ushers, greeters, or offering stewards.



HOUSEHOLD FAITH

Definition:

Affirming the central role of the household in student discipleship and calling the entire church to support households.

Exploration:

Parents are the primary spiritual influencers of their children. This includes those households where grandparents, guardians or other adults are the direct care providers; and it also includes those families with foster, adopted, or other children being raised. This is simultaneously wonderful and challenging. For those parents who are vibrantly living as kingdom citizens, expressing their life in Jesus, and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit, the church is an encourager, resourcer, and celebrator of their godly influence. For those homes where faith is a tacit practice, secondary consideration, or unreceived, the church must engage in the calling and discipleship of both parent and child.

Student ministry leaders need help to fully engage this value. Many are young themselves or do not have children, leaving them feeling (inaccurately) that they do not have the life experience to pastor parents. All student ministry leaders, regardless of their life stage, need to partner with the adult discipleship leader of the church to have a concerted (in concert) effort of discipling parents.

Discipleship that takes place at home is more consistent, more impactful, and more orienting than the two hours a week a young person spends at church. We see this in scripture, from the Shema to Jesus' teaching to Paul's instruction to call the whole church to support household faith: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joel 1:3; Matthew 7:11; and Colossians 3:21.



HOUSEHOLD FAITH

Contextualizing Questions:

What kind of language could you use to express that parents are the primary spiritual influencers of a child?

What is the value in the shared responsibility of the church and the home to raise young disciples?

How does the church hope to care for those homes whose adult members are not followers of Jesus, but whose young people are present in the church?

Activation:

Option 1: Share the Catechism in Family Prayer (available via nextgenanglican.com/catechism-in-family-prayer/) with each household. Offer a brief class on how homes can pray, read, and learn together.

Option 2: Before every student ministry retreat or large event, invite parents to a preparatory gathering. During this gathering, review the content of the event, provide a guide for parents to welcome their students home, and give a week's worth of follow-up questions for parents to ask in the home. Consider making this a meal and celebrating how these parents are raising disciples.

Option 3: Host a training for parents on how to share their gospel story in their home. The vast majority of young people do not know why, or if, their parents believe in Jesus.



LEADERSHIP

Definition:

Equipping and empowering all students and adults.

Exploration:

At its core, leadership is the practice of intentional influence. While in the church we see leadership expressed very visibly through our clergy, intentional influence can be practiced by anyone. This is central to becoming fully mature followers of Jesus, that each of us are expressing the glory of God in the whole of our lives such that others might believe. All disciples receive both the great commandments and the great commission.

In a student ministry, the value of leaders takes on two unique connotations. First, as we raise the next generation of Anglican leaders, we can begin equipping and empowering them to recognize and express their leadership. This is first a value before it can become a meaningful action. As a value, we are honoring the fact that there is not a junior varsity Holy Spirit, but one Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. At their baptism and confirmation, young people are receiving and confirming that the Holy Spirit is active in them, bringing them to full maturity and life in Jesus. A significant aspect of this is how we see them as capable emerging or young leaders.

The second connotation is for the adults who love and lead young people to Jesus. All adult volunteer leaders should be appropriately screened and trained to create safe ministry environments. Our training of these volunteers needs to continue in the direction of how they are leading young people to Jesus. These leaders are essential to raising the next generation of Anglican leaders.

We can see this value throughout scripture, but perhaps uniquely in these: 1 Samuel 3:1-18; Jeremiah 1:6-8; John 1:41; Acts 2:14-21; and James 3.



LEADERSHIP

Contextualizing Questions:

How would you express the value of equipping and empowering both young people and volunteers?

What are the theological convictions about leadership and the Holy Spirit that would be important to express and arrive at clarity for your context?

Is there a sense about the validity or capacity of young people as leaders that needs to be addressed?

Activation:

Option 1: Give one to two hours a week to the volunteer leaders who are leading students. Care for their faith, offer them training, or listen to their challenges.

Option 2: Connect student leaders to the Archbishop's School for Young Leaders for 2024 (learn more at nextgenanglican.com/archbishops-school-for-young-leaders/) This two-week, in-person training prepares young people to lead a project in their local church and community.

Option 3: Connect to professional development resources, such as the Student Leadership Network Learning Cohorts.



PURPOSEFULNESS

Definition:

Creating spaces, resources, and events that effectively foster life together in Christ and his kingdom.

Exploration:

Leaders shape environments. Through their decisions, postures, goals, and awareness of others, leaders curate physical and relational spaces to help arrive at a hoped-for outcome. Student ministry environments need as much purposefulness as any other formational environment in the church – perhaps more so, as they are for young disciples and emerging leaders.

This value includes the development and use of a strategic plan for student ministry that works in concert with the church and is based on the ministry we see in Jesus. It includes focusing on the stated goals of the ministry and avoiding becoming entertainment driven. And it helps ministry become more comprehensive, not relying on a series of events, but forming a catechetical community of young people. This value increases the impact and clarity of all our values.

Being purposeful promotes the expansive capacity of a student ministry, allowing it to scale in both size and scope. Purposefulness causes us to ask strategic questions, such as: How is the church meeting youth who are far from God and the church? In what ways are we calling students to say yes to Jesus in new or renewed ways? How do we help young people welcome Holy Spirit transformation? When and where are we sending students into the world with the love of the Father?

The scriptures invite us into this value: Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 20:24; Isaiah 46:10-11; John 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 5; and Revelation 4:11.



PURPOSEFULNESS

Contextualizing Questions:

There are many ways to express this value. What ideas and words would help your student ministry and church receive the value of purposefulness?

In all values, there is a tension between the current and preferred reality. How would growing in purposefulness help move your student ministry to a preferred reality?

Where do you already operate with high intentionality, and how can that help strengthen other areas?

Activation:

Option 1: Working with key leaders, develop or re-evaluate the student ministry strategic plan. The Student Leadership Network can help you to create or improve your plan by providing tools, examples, and experience.

Option 2: Every time we make a decision based on reasoning that “This is always how we have done it” or “This is what we did last year,” we have an opportunity to increase our purposefulness. Ask questions about what worked, what didn’t, and what needs to change.

Option 3: For every student ministry offering, from weekly gatherings to large events, Bible studies to pizza parties, create at least one discipleship-oriented goal or outcome. This is not usually linked to attendance, but what you are hoping students attend to in this space.



BONUS: YOUR STUDENT MINISTRY LEADER

Definition:

The church and its leaders commit to the faith formation and leadership development of those who serve and lead young people.

Exploration:

This expresses the value of both a person and a role.

First, does this church, recognizing both its capacity and the need for the church to engage young people in comprehensive relational discipleship, have a valued role for this work? Every church is in a different organizational reality, so the way this value is expressed in a role can be unique to each organization. The question is: How are we addressing this value, or is it not present?

Secondly, how do churches with a student ministry leader deepen this value by investing in the ongoing faith formation and leadership development of the person in that role? In general, we can make several assumptions about student ministry leaders. Many are either young or young in their ministry leadership. It is important to continue offering direct and ongoing training for their skills, ministry philosophy, and more. Many student ministry leaders, while fully invested and present in ministry with adolescents, are also likely to transition into other roles in the church, including by pursuing ordination. In short, your student ministry leader is likely a future deacon, priest, rector, or other ministry leader. Your influence at this stage of their ministry is wildly impactful. There is a real opportunity to support their life with Jesus as a ministry leader and to help create a formational trajectory. This is for their good and also for the benefit of the young people they are leading.

We see the way new leaders are raised up and shepherded in various passages: Exodus 33:11; Psalm 78:72; Proverbs 11:14; Matthew 20:26-28; John 13:13-17; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; and 2 Peter 1:5-10.



BONUS: YOUR STUDENT MINISTRY LEADER

Contextualizing Questions:

How would your church express the value for both a role and a person who is shepherding young people in your community?

How have you already been living into this value?

What aspect of this value would be an area of growth or change?

Activation:

Option 1: Rectors have so much to offer and so much to do. Rectors investing one hour every two weeks in the intentional formation or leadership mentoring of student ministry leaders would make a significant difference.

Option 2: Giving clear expectations for their work and ministry with the appropriate support across all aspects of their work, including their professional development, is key.

Option 3: Provide for and encourage the student ministry leader to have a spiritual director and other formational support systems.



Student Leadership Network

NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Rev. Canon Aaron Buttery
With the Student Leadership Network Team

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