



# CONNECTING KIDS AND CHRIST

## THE YOUNG LIFE CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO YOUTH MINISTRY

WESTERN GREAT LAKES REGION

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## THE NEED

One of the greatest needs in many congregations is effective youth ministry. The youth are frequently referred to as the church of the future when in fact they are a vital part of the church of today. Too often, though, our young people's confirmation into the church is actually a graduation ceremony from the church. Many young people begin exiting the fellowship of the church early in their high school years.

Finding trained and energetic leadership for the youth program may also be a problem. Many times adult sponsors with good intentions are drafted into a leadership position without any training and minimal support, and they either "sink or swim." Even churches with a full-time youth director often experience a "revolving door" as the average tenure in church youth ministry is still 18 months.

The youth program winds up being attended by a faithful few who feel at home there, and others who are forced to attend by well-meaning parents, but come to youth group meetings with negative, uncooperative attitudes. Many potential members choose not to be involved, and no attempts are made to reach out to other uncommitted young people.

## A SOLUTION

A creative solution to these problems is being found in an exciting partnership bringing Young Life and local congregations together.

For over eighty years, Young Life has been involved in specialized ministry to adolescents. The partnership is a way to link Young Life's expertise and a local congregation's resources together. The institutional church needs the enthusiasm and skills Young Life brings to youth ministry. Young Life needs the stability and ongoing sense of community that the church offers to young people.

## THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In a Young Life Church Partnership, the local congregation hires a Young Life trained person **who spends 70% of his or her time as the church's youth minister and 30% of his or her time in outreach ministry through Young Life.** It is essential that the congregation understand that they are hiring someone not only to care for their own youth, but to be involved in outreach ministry as well. Quite often, the young people reached through the outreach portion of the partnership have no church home. It is natural for these young people to be led into the nurturing fellowship of the congregation sponsoring the partnership.

The venue for the outreach portion of the job is decided by the congregation. The partner may join an existing Young Life ministry or begin a new one.

As a full-time employee of the church, the partner is directly accountable to the pastor and appropriate governing bodies of the congregation. The supervision function rests exclusively with the congregation. The partner is responsible to Young Life only in a training capacity and as a volunteer leader of a Young Life ministry team.

Young Life provides training and support both from the local area and regional level through prayer, fellowship, spiritual growth, resource sharing, and networking. These sessions with peers and mentors in youth ministry are very important for the personal and professional growth of the youth minister. Young Life asks the congregation to pay \$2,000 per year for placement services, training and support seminars, use of Young life properties and other conferences and training events during the year.

## COMMITMENTS

Young Life expects the church to agree to the following commitments before assigning a youth minister to the church:

1. That all young people are welcome to the youth program of the church regardless of race or socio-economic background.
2. That both men and women are equally encouraged to use their gifts as God calls them into ministry.
3. The church will provide Young Life with self-study information to help assess needs and place staff.
4. A salary and benefits package at or above a minimum level set by Young Life.

## CHURCH PARTNER TRAINER/COORDINATOR

Steve Winkle serves Young Life's Western Great Lakes Region as Regional Initiatives Coordinator/Church Partner Trainer. He also serves as Outreach Director for a local church. Any church interested in pursuing this type of partnership may contact:

**Steve Winkle**

1027 Swather Dr. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Phone: (616) 570-2286

winkman1962@gmail.com

## THE CANDIDATES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

The young men and women who will be hired by the church to develop their youth ministry are carefully chosen by Young Life. Each must meet the following requirements:

1. Graduation from college (preferred).
2. An interview process with Young Life.
3. Previous experience in Young Life ministry encouraged.
4. An active involvement in their own church.
5. A minimum three-year commitment to serve in this position.

Many of our partners continue for a fourth or fifth year, others have pursued a full-time position with Young Life, others have pursued a full-time position with the church, some have entered seminary and become pastors. If the original partner leaves after three years and the congregation wishes to continue with the partnership model, Young Life will place another candidate.

## ONGOING TRAINING & SUPPORT

The person hired by the church typically has a strong background in relational youth ministry with Young Life, but little or no experience in leading a church youth group. Therefore, Young Life provides regular training and support at the local and regional level, to assist the youth minister. The partners come together and share successes and failures, look into new ideas and ministry structures, collectively investigate trends in adolescent culture, grow in their understanding of the gospel, and pray for one another.

In addition, Young Life maintains formal partnerships with several seminaries, including Western Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Field education classes are available to church partners which are accredited by these seminaries. Also, short-term academic classes are offered by these seminaries. Church partners are offered a tuition reduction.



## PROFILE OF A CHURCH PARTNER

The majority of the staff we place are recent college graduates. They typically exhibit:

**A strong commitment to Jesus Christ.** Their desire to serve Christ is the primary reason they accepted this position. Their commitment to Christ is more important than their commitment to the church or denomination.

**Lots of energy and enthusiasm.** A major strength that comes with some rough edges. This is usually the first full-time job they have held and their ego is tied very closely to their job performance.

**Inexperience about the workings of the church.** Realize your youth director may have *no idea* how the church actually works. They probably don't know how committees function, what a Sunday School curriculum is, what church polity is, and they may have little or no experience planning a regular series of youth meetings. Young Life will work with the church partner to help them succeed in these areas, but they need your help, too, understanding the rules the church operates by and the significance of different roles in the church.

**Good experience in outreach.** Their success reaching kids through Young Life's relational approach has given them the confidence to take on three years as a youth minister. Continuing their ministry with Young Life is significant to them and it is important the church sees their outreach with Young Life as a vital ministry of the church. They need to know you value what they do with Young Life. Although there is no guarantee the partnership will produce new members, there is a good chance it will be a bridge to bring in new kids and their families to the church over time.

**Although they appear confident, they may be lonely** taking on their first job. Remember yourself after college taking a new job in a new city. Your partner needs all the support and encouragement you can give. We will provide some of the fellowship and nurture for your partner with peers in our regular church partner meetings.

**Inexperience with handling budgets.** As their first regular paycheck comes in, they may need help budgeting their money. We see their involvement like a "peace corps" status—lots of commitment but not much money. They will need any help you can give them with housing, purchasing and repairing cars, paying back student loans, etc. Be aware that budgeting is new territory for them, so don't expect them to know how to plan and use a youth ministry budget right away.

**Great skills in working with kids but less knowledgeable** about working with adults. Remember how

old this person is. We will work with them on polishing their skills with committees and adults, but remember their major gift is knowing how to connect with your kids.

**Unfamiliar with how to recruit others to join them in ministry.** They will tend to be “lone rangers” unless you (and Young Life) help them in this area.

**Inexperience in a supervisory relationship.** They need to know that you are committed to their success and that job criticism isn’t a personal assault. Just sensing that you like them is probably more important to them than professional guidance.

## WHAT CHURCH LEADERS ARE SAYING ABOUT YOUNG LIFE...

*“Our Lord's open question, ‘When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth?’ challenges each generation of Christians to transmit the faith to the next. Today, perhaps more than ever before, we must live intentionally for the sake of those who are younger, modeling for them what life in Jesus Christ is all about. I know of no organization responding to our Lord's question with greater integrity and effectiveness than Young Life. They're simply splendid. What an exciting prospect to link Church and Young Life together.”*

Dale Cooper  
Former Chaplain, Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

*“The Young Life Church Partnership Program represents one of the most creative alliances available to congregational leaders today!”*

Lyle Schaller  
Parish Consultant  
Naperville, Illinois

*“As a father who rejoiced as our three teens were enriched by their involvement in Young Life, as a pastor who eagerly supported a church partner program in my congregation, as a professor at Hope College who celebrated contacts with students who were former Young Lifers, and as a seminary president, I applaud the leadership which Young Life has provided in the area of youth ministry.”*

Dennis Voskuil  
Past President, Western Seminary  
Holland, Michigan



# TYPICAL POSITION DESCRIPTION FOR DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

## FUNCTION

To create and direct a youth ministry program within the membership of the congregation and in the community, with high school and junior high school students. The youth minister will provide leadership, training and encouragement to these groups and their leaders. The community involvement will be under the direction of Young Life.

## EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

This position requires high school and college degrees, and experience and training in relational youth ministry.

## RELATIONSHIPS

1. BUILDS quality relationship with youth, leaders, and staff.
2. WORKS with pastoral staff and appropriate committees in executing the responsibilities mentioned below.
3. COOPERATES with governmental bodies of the church in the area of youth ministry (Classis, Presbytery, Diocese, etc.).
4. ATTENDS Young Life staff events that do not conflict with church youth events and will be trained by Young Life bi-monthly. The 30% of work hours shall be devoted to Young Life high school campus outreach, the Young Life club, church partner training and other functions related to Young Life.

## SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

1. SUPERVISES the youth ministry program for the senior and junior high students of the church, with an understanding that youth ministry includes worship, education, spiritual development, evangelism, missions, fellowship, affirmation of youth, and support of families of youth.
2. WORKS through the committee structure in securing approval for youth activities and use of curriculum and teaching aids.



3. CONSULTS, ADVISES and ASSISTS the Christian Education Committee and through a WORKING relationship with this group DETERMINES and MAINTAINS a Christian Education program for junior and senior high commensurate with the needs of the church.
4. OVERSEES the planning of youth programs for special worship services such as Youth Sunday, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas or any other event that is felt will strengthen and enhance this ministry.
5. COORDINATES with the pastor and worship committee for participation of the youth in worship services.
6. TRAINS, ENCOURAGES and GUIDES volunteers responsible for leadership in youth ministry.
7. COORDINATES youth activities with the pastoral staff and minister of music and does not plan events that will conflict with other events on the church calendar.
8. OVERSEES the planning and SUPERVISES the activities of retreats. COORDINATES these activities with other groups.
9. ATTENDS and PARTICIPATES in all staff meetings. WORKS and COOPERATES with other staff members.
10. RECOMMENDS and ASSISTS in preparation of annual youth ministry budget.
11. OVERSEES the care of equipment that pertains to youth ministry.
12. MAKES expenditures for supplies, materials, equipment and retreats as authorized by appropriate committee.
13. COORDINATES vacation schedule with pastors.

## TYPICAL WEEK FOR A CHURCH PARTNERSHIP MINISTRY

(Best to work 2 out of 3 blocks a day)

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
7:00-7:30						Bible Study w/ group of kids	
7:30-8:00	Quiet Time	Quiet Time	Quiet Time	Quiet Time	Quiet Time		
8:00-8:30	Church		Church Staff Meeting		SABBATH DAYS REST	Quiet Time	Quiet Time
8:30-9:00	Activities					Office Admin.	
9:00-9:30	including					Planning for	
9:30-10:00	Worship		Administration			Sunday's Activity	
10:00-10:30	(4 Hours)					or	
10:30-11:00						Church	
11:00-11:30	1 hour of prep		Attend 1 lunch			Partners	
11:30-12:00	for evening		period at school			Meeting	
12:00-1:00		Lunch at H.S.		Lunch with		Lunch with kid or	
1:00-1:30			Office /Planning	Leader		leader or staff or	
1:30-2:00		Staff Meeting		Office/Planning		Partners	
2:00-2:30		with Supervisor		Time for Church			
2:30-3:00		Planning Time		Activity @ night			
3:00-3:30		for YL Club					
3:30-4:00							
4:00-4:30				Contact with kids			
4:40-5:00				at the H.S.			
5:00-5:30		Contact with kids					
5:30-6:00		after school					
6:00-6:30	1 hour of prep	YL Leaders Meet		Church Activity			Family Night
6:30-7:00	for evening	Prep for Club		With Junior or			Date Night w/ Spouse /
7:00-7:30	Youth Group		Attend kid game	Senior		Attend H.S.	significant
7:30-8:00	Activities	Club	at the H.S.	High		event	other / friends
8:00-8:30	(3 hours)		or Area Leader	Meet w/ leaders		and leaders and	
8:30-9:00			Meeting	to evaluate and		adult	
9:00-9:30				plan coming			
9:30-10:00		Hang out with		event			
10:00-10:30		kids after club					
10:30-11:00							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9-10 Hours</b>	<b>11 Hours</b>	<b>7-8 Hours</b>	<b>10-11 Hours</b>		<b>9-10 Hours</b>	<b>Total Hrs. 46-50</b>



# DEVELOPING A CHURCH PARTNERSHIP STEP-BY-STEP

1. The church calls Young Life expressing an interest in a partnership.
2. Young Life staff meet with the congregational committee to hear needs, answer questions, and agree to continue the process.
3. The church completes a questionnaire to assist Young Life in placing a candidate and provides Young Life with a job description.
4. Young Life begins a search for candidates for the position.
5. Young Life screens candidates and makes a recommendation.
6. The church interviews the candidate and informs Young Life if they choose to hire the person.
7. The Young Life church partner trainer meets with church supervisory personnel or committees to go over and sign covenant between Young Life and the church.
8. The church hires the candidate.
9. The youth minister's immediate priorities are the church's young people and programs. Typically, during the first couple of months the time split is around 80/20 instead of 70/30.
10. The youth minister begins making contacts at a local school, meeting with the young people of the church, and naturally also develops relationship with their friends.
11. The youth minister joins the leadership team of an existing Young Life ministry as a part of the mission of the church. If a new ministry is being started, it will probably not begin regular meetings until six to twelve months after hiring.
12. The youth minister coordinates camping ministry in the light of the needs and desires of the congregation.

# THE FINANCIAL PACKAGE

The financial package outlined below represents a **minimum** salary for Young Life to enter the partnership. Future increases are determined by the congregation.

Gross Salary	\$ 31,500
Automobile Allowance	\$ 1,200
Health Insurance	\$ 9,000 (estimated)
FICA @ 7.65	\$ 2,410
Continuing Education	\$ 500
Training and Support Fee	\$ <u>2,000</u>
Total Package	\$46,610

Benefits include two weeks vacation, sick leave, church holidays and day off per week. The church pays worker's compensation through its insurance agent. ***The health insurance cost is an estimate. The partner is not eligible for health coverage through Young Life.***

Additional youth ministry expenses would include program expenses for church events.

## THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT FEE

The \$2,000 training and support fee is payable to Young Life (mail to Young Life's Western Great Lakes – Regional Church Partnership Program, 1027 Swather St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508) in quarterly payments of \$500. Payments are due January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.

The training and support fee pays for:

- Regional Coordinator for church partnerships
- Initial placement of partner
- Training and support, which includes consistent (weekly/monthly) Area team meetings and Regional meetings with other church partners (all meals included). Church partners are also invited to quarterly Regional YL staff meetings.
- Consistent individual meetings with Area Director and Regional Coordinator
- Access to Young Life camping program for fall and winter weekends + summer camp
- Regional Coordinator in person "check ins" twice annually (more upon request) with CP church staff supervisor
- Help with performance goals and evaluation upon request



# CHURCH PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Please discuss these questions with the appropriate committee and email answers to Steve Winkle ([winkman1962@gmail.com](mailto:winkman1962@gmail.com)). Or complete our online questionnaire at [westerngreatlakesyl.com/churchpartnership](http://westerngreatlakesyl.com/churchpartnership). The search for a candidate for your church will begin when we receive your answers. Your answers will help us select the best partner for your situation.

1. Please describe your church in one paragraph.
2. How would you define youth ministry?
3. Tell about your church's previous experience with youth ministry.
4. Why are you choosing a Young Life Church Partnership?
5. What would you say are this congregation's greatest strengths? Where do you need to improve?
6. What are the three most important skills or qualities you are looking for in a candidate?
7. Would you prefer the partner be male or female? Are there people in the church with strong feelings about this?
8. Are there any qualities that would automatically disqualify a person from consideration? (e.g., age, theological stance, etc.)
9. Are there deep traditions in the church that need to be respected? Are there traditional youth ministry events the partner should be aware of?
10. Do you expect the partner to become a member of the church?
11. Do you understand the outreach portion of the person's job? How do you see it happening in your situation?
12. What are your expectations of the partner for Sunday School, Music, Confirmation, catechism, or Worship? Is there a staff dress code? Do you expect the partner to maintain office hours?
13. What would you say some of your church's unwritten rules are?
14. How are staff evaluated? How will the partner know when he/she is doing a good job?



# COVENANT BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND YOUNG LIFE

It is our desire that the church and Young Life have a clear understanding of the expectations for the minister to youth.

\_\_\_\_\_

*(youth minister)*

\_\_\_\_\_

*(church)*

Therefore, the Young Life Church Partnership requires the following structure.

**Young Life will provide for the youth minister:**

1. Training on a regular basis for nurture, instruction and coaching in youth ministry.
2. Young Life Area Director and Regional Church Partner Supervisor.
3. Connection to other church partners.
4. Equal priority with Young Life staff for summer camp quota.
5. Review of performance goals yearly and year-end ministry assessment by regional office, if requested.
6. Scheduled meetings with youth minister and church supervisor.

**The Congregation will provide for the youth minister:**

1. A detailed job description to be submitted to Young Life prior to staffing.  
Date to be received: \_\_\_\_\_
2. A designated supervisory agent. The supervision function rests solely with the church.  
Name of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Church supervisor will interact with the youth minister immediately upon employment to design performance goals consistent with the job description. This document will serve as an assessment tool to be updated two times yearly.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Salary for the youth minister: \_\_\_\_\_

Total package for Church Partnership: \_\_\_\_\_

Training and Support Fee: \$2,000

Payment Schedule: Quarterly payments of \$500 to regional office, due:  
January 1, April 1, July 1 & October 1  
Mail to: Western Great Lakes Young Life, 1027 Swather St  
SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508

**SIGNATURES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Pastor Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Young Life Regional Representative Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Church Supervisor Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Minister Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Young Life Area Director Date

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Church Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Church Treasurer: \_\_\_\_\_

Young Life Regional Office: Young Life’s Western Great Lakes Region  
Young Life Regional Director: Chris Theule  
Regional Church Partner Trainer: Steve Winkle



# MISSION STATEMENT

*Young Life's mission is to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith.*

We believe that we, as a community of adult Christians who belong to a broad diversity of church traditions, have been called and gifted by God to carry out this ministry.

We do this by building personal relationships with young people, by sharing our lives and participating with them in a variety of experiences through which the Gospel can be heard and experienced.

We carry out our mission under the authority of Scripture and in accordance with our understanding of Incarnational witness, seeking to en flesh the Gospel in our lives and relationships, and therefore we are committed:

- To the welfare and spiritual health of those who do this ministry, that they may do it out of a consistent and growing relationship with Christ and his church.
- To submit to and communicate effectively the whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as best we understand that Gospel.
- To researching and developing innovative approaches to the evangelization of young people so that the unreached, uninterested or uncommitted youth of the world shall continue to be reached.
- To all young people wherever they may live in the world, or whatever may be their social, economic, ethnic, cultural or racial environment.
- To seek out and welcome all those whom God directs to our ministry, male and female of all races, salaried and volunteer, with a diversity of Christian traditions linked in our common purpose, and to honor their calling and encourage the fullest expression of their gifts.
- To obey our Lord's mandate that all his people should be one, and therefore to work cooperatively within the church of Jesus Christ around the world, so that more young people may be reached.
- To the highest standards of stewardship of all the resources placed in our trust.



# STATEMENT OF FAITH

## **Preamble**

We the members of the Young Life mission – trustees, staff, instructors at Young Life schools and volunteers – join together in our affirmation of the following articles and our central purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and introducing adolescents everywhere to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.

## **Article I**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, being given by divine inspiration, are the Word of God, the final and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

## **Article II**

In the Scriptures, God reveals Himself as the living and true God, Creator of all things. Perfect in love and righteous in all His ways, this one God exists eternally as a Trinity of persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## **Article III**

God made man and woman in His image that He might have fellowship with us. Being estranged from God by our disobedience, we are, as sinful people, incapable of a right relationship to God apart from divine grace.

## **Article IV**

The only Mediator between God and all human beings is Jesus Christ our Lord, God's eternal Son, who as man fully shared and fulfilled our humanity in a life of perfect obedience.

## **Article V**

By His death in our place, Jesus revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having risen bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven, He rules as Lord over all and intercedes for us as our Great High Priest.

## **Article VI**

The Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Gospel, renews our hearts, persuading us to repent of our sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit we are led to trust in divine mercy, whereby we are forgiven all our sins, justified by faith through the merit of Christ our Savior, adopted into God's family as His children and enabled so to live in the world that all people may see our good works and the Gospel of grace at work in our lives and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

**Article VII**

God, by His Word and Spirit, calls us as sinful people into the fellowship of Christ's body. Thus He creates the one holy, catholic and apostolic church, united in the bonds of love, endowed with the gifts of the Spirit and summoned by Christ to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments, to carry on the ministry of reconciliation, to relieve human need and to strive for social justice.

**Article VIII**

God's redemptive purpose will be consummated by the return of Christ to raise the dead, judge all people and establish His glorious kingdom. Those who are apart from Christ shall be eternally separated from God's presence, but the redeemed shall live and reign with Him forever.