

# KEY PLAYERS IN LIFE TEEN

*“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many.”*

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Just as in the larger Church, there are many important, yet distinct, roles that need to be filled to create a healthy and vibrant youth ministry program. Each role requires different skills and gifts, and each uniquely contributes to the building up of the body of Christ. No role is better than another, just as no role deserves more honor than another. In this chapter, we will look at the roles and responsibilities of the key players in a Life Teen program.

## **PRIESTS**

Above all else, the role of the priest in your ministry is support. The priest is vital to youth ministry, but that doesn't mean he has to be present at every function. It should be understood that he is an advocate for the youth of the parish, and he actively supports the efforts of all who are implementing a quality youth program in the parish.

What is the role of a priest in regard to Life Teen and Edge? Sacraments play an integral role in this ministry and the priest leads the way for us all. Making sure that the teens and all parishioners are fully and actively participating at your Youth Mass or Mass in general is a key role for the priest. To help plan youth-friendly homilies, Life Teen provides Liturgy Planning Guides with homily ideas to help you break open the message for teens.

Over and over again we hear about the breath of fresh air that Life Teen brings to the parish, and how priestly vocations have been renewed and refreshed through their involvement in Life Teen. The most effective priests with teens do not have to be the most dynamic. Young people are hard to fool if they sense they are cared for, and then they will respond. One of the main reasons that Life Teen has generated so many priestly vocations over the years is the positive interaction teens have with priests. Many priests go along on teen retreats and trips. Many priests attend the Life Nights following Mass and at times give testimonies, teachings and lead Eucharistic Adoration for the teens.

## **YOUTH MINISTER**

What makes a good youth minister? They should have a love for God and a love for teens. It doesn't matter what gender they are or what age group they fall into, what matters most is their ability to relate to young people and their commitment to the spiritual development of those they serve. The best youth minister is the one who is willing to dedicate himself or herself to the mission of Life Teen: leading teens closer to Christ.

What is the role of the youth minister? Truly the youth minister is a jack-of-all-trades. He or she is a mentor, administrator, event planner, janitor, speaker, nurse, entertainer, and so much more. It is the role of the youth minister to create and maintain a working vision of youth ministry for the parish. In doing so, the youth minister coordinates and delegates responsibility for all aspects of the youth ministry program from teen liturgy to Life Nights to retreats to weekly outreach.

One of the most important roles of the youth minister is to recruit, train, and maintain a healthy and

active Core team. These are the adults that will work most closely with the youth. The youth minister is a disciple, and knows how to find more disciples. The youth minister must be a team player, able to tap into the culture of teenagers and relate that knowledge to the pastor and the Core team. Within the parish context, the youth minister is an advocate for the youth, ensuring that the parish community meets the needs of the young people.

## **CORE**

One passionate youth minister is great, but one person cannot minister to an entire youth group. That is where the Core team comes in. Core Members are adults who choose to respond to their baptismal call by serving young people. The Life Teen Program relies heavily on the time and talents of adults within the parish community, men and women who truly care about our youth, and who are selfless enough to make sacrifices that ensure that our young people come to know God through the love of Christ and the truth of the Sacraments.

One question you have to ask yourself is, “Who can serve as a Core Member?” If you have that image in your head of what the perfect Core Member looks and acts like, get rid of it. There is no “one perfect” look.

One of the things that make a strong Core team is diversity. In fact, if all of the Core Members look and act “too similar” the lack of diversity can actually lead to adversity. Younger adults are great to have around for their proximity in age and their energy, but married couples are great to have also, as are older adults who bring forth a life experience that is sometimes lacking in some of the younger Core.

We’re looking for servant hearts, hearts that are form-able, not just the “perfect-looking” or the “perfectly formed” Core.

## **MUSIC DIRECTOR**

The role of a music director or worship leader both in Mass and Life Teen events is vital. A good leader is one who can lead prayer, one who can usher others into the presence of God. He or she is one who can develop a music ministry.

They should be trained and know how to present sing-able and appropriate liturgical music. He or she should attend the Catholic Youth Ministry Training Convention and other opportunities to learn more about youth-focused liturgy. The music at the youth Mass is to enhance the liturgy, not presented as a “show”. The leader should be humble, and dedicated to the mission of Life Teen. Many parishes look to their own parishioners or the local university’s music departments to enlist good musicians.

## **PARENTS**

Pope St. John Paul II called the family the “domestic Church”, and so it is. The first youth ministers for teens are their mothers and fathers. Parents are the first teachers of the faith to their children. So youth ministers must work in union with parents to provide an environment where young people’s social, emotional, and spiritual growth is nurtured.

Out of the parent/youth minister relationship often develops a need to minister to the parents. It was out of this need that Life Teen developed Parent Life. The Parent Life group strives to present parents opportunities to not only draw closer to Christ but also to support youth ministry in the parish.

Teens, parents, the Life Teen program, and the parish at large benefit greatly from this ministry. The parents’ ministry can assist the youth minister and core with time consuming administrative work.

This enables the Life Teen program to grow because the core and youth minister can spend more time in relational ministry with the teens.

By helping with the program, the adult community gains a broader understanding of the goals of Life Teen and how it works. And, of course, this ministry provides adult fellowship and develops parents' spiritually.

## TEEN LEADERS

You know who they are. They have the respect of their peers. They have a heart for God, not only in Church and at life nights, but also on their school campuses, in the locker rooms and at their work. They are the more mature teens who understand a little bit more about what it means to have the heart of a servant.

It is important to develop leaders among the teens and give them opportunities to use their leadership skills within the program. These teens are not necessarily set apart with the title of "teen leader," but the youth minister and the Core know that they can rely on these teens to help with liturgical ministries, Life Nights, skits, videos, and other events.

Meet with them weekly utilizing the Unleashed Missionary Discipleship resource. Life Teen provides a weeklong leadership conference for Junior and Senior called Life Teen Leadership Conference. This is a great way to train and encourage teens to step up as a leader in the parish.

## DELEGATING ADDITIONAL ROLES

The key to a successful youth ministry, actually, a successful parish is to take the gifts and talents parishioners have and use them for God's glory. If you are new to your parish, ask around for who is good at these jobs and invite them to be a part of your ministry. Think outside the box and don't limit the commitment people make to your Life Teen ministry just to the Core Team.

A true ministry that advocates for its teens is a ministry that has the entire parish involved in reaching out to the youth. Here are some ideas on how to break down the volunteer commitments your ministry needs.

**INTERCESSORY TEAM** – It is vital to have a group of people committed to supporting youth ministry through prayer. This group should specifically be praying for the Core team by name. Take time to update this group on the prayer needs of the Core and the teens.

**ENVIRONMENT TEAM** – This is a group of teens, young adults or adults who are artistically talented and good with tools. Dads can build some of the best Life Night and Retreat environments in the world. So can teens. Having an environment team takes a lot of work off the Core and gives them more time in the week for relational ministry.

**WEB SITE DESIGNER/UPDATER** – If your ministry doesn't have a web site you can always ask for someone to design one for you. There are so many talented teens, young adults and adults who can do web design and it will make your life so much easier when it comes to promoting your events and getting information and forms out to your teens.

**MARKETING** – This may seem a bit corporate, but if you can find someone who is great with marketing, you will never have to spend time at your computer designing a flyer for your youth group. If you find this person invite them to create flyers and newsletters, email blasts to teens, Facebook and MySpace event invitations, etc. Get creative and text, IM and reach your teens in any way you can.

Graphic Design – Again, if you can find a graphic designer for your ministry, you will never have to pay someone to design a t-shirt for retreat or a flyer for an event. This is a small commitment someone with this talent can offer your ministry.

**PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER** - At each Life Night or youth event you will want someone to photograph and/or videotape the night and post photos to the parish or youth ministry website. Teens love to see YouTube videos of skits from the Life Night and photos they can share online. Having a few photographers and/or videographers for Life Nights, events and retreats is a blessing for your ministry. You can even use the footage for an end of the year video or slideshow.

**OFFICE HELP** - There is always a newsletter, mailing, retreat form, letter or some other important office job that needs to get done. Create a list of adults and/or teens who are willing to do some basic office work that involves labels, stamps and bulk mail.

**SERVICE AND OUTREACH** - Having some adults (depending on diocesan guidelines the age will vary) to coordinate service projects such as visits to the homeless shelter, mission trips, Food Fasts, and other service projects is a very important piece of a comprehensive youth ministry program. Look for parents and adults who will assist you with the monthly, quarterly or annual service projects. Safe Environment training and fingerprinting are mandatory for this ministry.

**COOKS & FOOD SERVERS** - Food will always be a huge part of youth ministry so you must find parents to cook for you. Parents can sign up on a rotating basis to cook and serve snacks at Life Nights or meals on retreats.

**DEVELOPMENT/FUNDRAISING TEAM** - Create a team to handle all fundraising events for your parish. This will prove to be a great service for you in the long run.

**LITURGY COORDINATOR** - Find one person who can help coordinate the teens who will serve as the various liturgical ministers. This person can schedule the necessary training and create schedules of the teen lectors, altar servers, etc.

