

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg Youth Ministry Certification School (YMCS) Guidelines

Mission Statement

The Youth Ministry Certification School at Gettysburg Seminary will provide continuing education and theological training in the areas of youth and family ministry in an effort to develop more qualified youth leaders, who are committed to the Gospel, for service in the church and world.

Definition:

Certification is defined as a candidate's successful completion of all classroom study, participation in all activities pertaining to the course and submission of a written plan for implementing youth ministry in the congregational setting, accompanied by a plan presentation at the end of the fourteen day course. Certification is NOT the equivalent of an undergraduate or graduate degree. However, it may be applied to an undergraduate or associate in ministry degree track with permission from an accredited institution granting such degree.

Expectations:

It is expected that candidates will complete the following components, which together provide an increased understanding of congregational youth ministry and how to implement such a program in a congregational setting. These components include:

1. Participation in an adventure education/skills application segment
2. Participation in classroom education designed to focus on practical, theological and theoretical applications needed to implement effective youth and family ministry.
3. The presentation of a congregational long-range plan or design for implementing youth ministry, at the end of the fifteen-day term. The presentation should demonstrate the candidate's awareness of and growth in the skills necessary for implementing youth ministry in the congregation. The presentation will be accompanied by a written report. *(At the discretion of the director of the YMCS course, a candidate may substitute a portfolio of current work, or the development of field project using an action/reflection approach, in place of their long-range presentation)*

The Adventure Education/Skills Application Week

Outcomes:

This segment of the course lasts four (4) days and is designed to strengthen the candidates:

- Ability to define youth and family ministry
- Ability to more fully understand and integrate small group dynamics, to form and facilitate small and large groups and lead or accompany groups through a variety of interactive learning experiences.
- Awareness and responsibility for various safety issues surrounding themselves, the organization they serve and their group participants.

- Appreciation and sensitivity to others in settings sometimes outside their own personal comfort zone
- Sense of personal integrity and faith commitment.
- Openness to personal growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Awareness of the dynamics of effective leadership.
- Awareness of the many resources, both published and human, available to them.

Approach & Context:

1. Candidates experience adventure based education, including low & high ropes challenge courses and outdoor ministries experiences.
2. Candidates experience practical, hands-on planning of youth Bible studies, meetings, retreats and interactive learning activities.
3. Fundamental and practical concepts are introduced that help develop a more complete understanding of youth & family leadership development including, but not limited to...

The Child in Our Hands congregational/home ministry model

The Four Keys and Five Rivers model

Shifting paradigms in youth and family ministry

Family meeting development

Covenanting

Principles and practice of outdoor and adventure education

Principles and practices of interactive and active learning

Youth ministry as evangelism

Youth ministry as building Christ-centered relationships

4. Encouraging candidates to incorporate daily devotions and worship into the community.
5. Journaling
6. Team building

The hope for this first week is that the candidate will more clearly define what youth ministry is and how it can be introduced into their congregation in a more complete and holistic way. Candidates will be challenged physically and emotionally to remind them of the feelings and emotions young people experience while involved in interactive and outdoor/adventure education. Practical, hands-on teaching dynamics will be discussed and shared. Candidates will experience ways to take what they are learning throughout the fourteen-day course and deliver it to their youth in a way they can understand and relate to as teenagers. How does one build group unity? How do we involve youth in daily devotions? How does the youth ministry affect the congregational community and vice versa? How can we stay energized and prepared to do the work to which Christ calls us? These questions and many others will be addressed in Week 1

The Adventure Education/Skills Application Week is primarily staffed by alumni of the course and trained specialists in the youth & family ministry practices mentioned above. A YMCS Director and one coach for every ten candidates are required to facilitate the first week of the YMCS Course.

Classroom Education Days 5-14

Outcomes:

The classroom education segment lasts 10 days and is designed so that candidates...

- Have a more complete understanding of the message and content of Scripture
- Can clearly articulate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a variety of settings
- Can develop a commitment to and understanding of the larger Lutheran church and its mission.
- May grow in their understanding of Lutheran theology
- Design Bible studies that are theologically accurate and deliver youth to a greater understanding of Christ.
- Become more sensitive to the cultural and contemporary issues faced by youth.
- Understand the multicultural nature of ministry with youth and their families and its implications, including inclusivity and diversity of programming.
- More fully understand the role of family in youth ministry.
- Help to develop youth ministry programming and models.
- Develop an awareness of and how to help “at-risk” youth.
- Develop appreciation of and skills for short and long-range planning.
- Grow in their understanding of the network that exists to service youth and family ministry within the church including outdoor ministries, retreats and service opportunities, national and regional gatherings, campus ministry, seminaries and the ELCA Youth Ministry Network.
- Develop an awareness of the need for peer ministry training.
- Understand how to develop a youth-friendly congregational environment.
- Are empowered to build a team-based approach to youth ministry.
- Are theologically and programmatically able to incorporate youth into worship.
- Are able to identify, recruit and train lay volunteers for youth ministry.

Approach & content:

1. The Bible and it's contents...14-16 hours
 - Old & New Testament themes
 - Methodology for studying the Bible
 - Study of the Gospels and what makes each unique and different
 - Study of the Epistles and Revelation and their impact on today's teen
 - Exegesis and how to apply it when teaching youth

It is expected candidates will come away with a basic understanding of law and Gospel and theology of the Cross. It is further expected that candidates will gain an appreciation of what their biblical studies can offer to help us further understand and explain Christ's teachings and ministry. Candidates should be able to articulate the differences between the Gospels and be able to apply Biblical teachings to modern occurrences and their implications. Perhaps, most importantly, we hope to help candidates deliver Biblical teachings to youth using age appropriate language and by relating it to issues they face in their daily lives. Basically, discovering how to make the Bible real for youth today.

2. Lutheran Confessions & Luther's influence...8-10 hours

Lutheran Confessions & Catechism

Justification

Who was Luther? What does it mean to be a Lutheran Christian? What do the teachings of Luther mean to young people today? What do they mean to us as a church? What does it mean to be saved by Grace? What is justification? What influences have led to the development of the Lutheran church throughout the ages? All of these questions and more are addressed during this phase of study for the candidate. Inevitably, youth ask us, what's the difference between Lutherans and the Jewish faith...or Episcopalians, Agnostics, etc? We should be able to answer and help them get a grasp of what their Lutheran heritage means. More importantly, we should be able to engage them in discussion of these topics to better equip them for the time when their friend from the charismatic congregation down the street challenges them to explain their faith. Quite often we do not equip our young people as well as other denominations do for these discussions, and they are often left feeling vulnerable and unsure of why they are Lutheran. Further examination of new and traditional ways of doing catechism will be examined and discussed during this segment.

3. Our culture and our youth...12-14 hours

Youth and multicultural ministry

Youth ministry and evangelism

Theology of Youth Ministry: Jesus, Paul and a new hope

State of Youth today

Cultural and religious paradigm shifts

Drugs and gangs

Generational analysis: boomers, genx'ers and millennials

American religious history & cultural trends

Youth sexuality and making congregations a safe place from predators

Youth ministry, or ministry of any sort can fall short for the individual with whom we are ministering to without a firm understanding of the context within which our message is being delivered. In this section candidates will examine where society is at in terms of relating to our youth and to youth in general. How can we be like Jesus and deliver His message to youth in a language and a way they will comprehend? We will examine the forces challenging us as a church for the time and attention of youth, and look at ways to keep youth involved in our programs. Candidates will further examine ways to help "at-risk" youth, while learning to be proactive rather than reactive in keeping youth from falling into the "at-risk" category. Issues of boundaries and youth sexuality will be discussed along with an examination of the ELCA's policy on making congregations a safe place for youth.

4. Family Ministry...10-12 hours

Luther's teachings about the involvement of family

Practical hands-on help for families

Boundaries & ethics

The Child in Our Hands model

Families in the Bible

Candidates will learn the important role families play in partnering with us as youth leaders in the faith formation of their children. Study will include examination of

traditional roles of families from the Bible and Luther's perspective, but will also include a look at today's non-traditional family structures. Candidates will be introduced to resources that they may recommend to families for use in encouraging faith conversations within the household. Resources for partnering with parents in faith formation of their children will also be introduced and examined.

5. Christian Education...10-12 hours

- Multiple Intelligences & Christian Ed
- Age appropriate teaching methods
- Lifelong catechesis
- Preaching, children's sermons and speaking the Word
- Bible study and contemporary music
- Confirmation ministry

Candidates are introduced to traditional and non-traditional methods of Christian education. Multiple intelligences are examined and age appropriate teaching methods are discussed and practiced during this segment. Candidates experience ways of doing Bible study that are interactive and fun, as well as educational. Contemporary Christian music and its effect on youth ministry are examined, with a segment devoted to teaching the candidate the differences between today's Christian music and secular music with Christian overtones. How to use Christian music in your youth ministry is further discussed and shared. Confirmation ministry resources are shared with discussion of ways to deliver the confirmation message to youth so they truly learn the message and not simply memorize the words.

6. Ministry strategies...24-26 hours

- Music & choirs
- Church growth and programming tiers
- Games and interactive learning
- Drama and theater in youth ministry
- Media and film's role in youth faith formation
- Developing spirituality in youth
- Camps, retreats and mountaintop experiences
- Youth in worship
- Handling conflicts with youth and families

There are many ways to minister to youth using drama, music, games and activities. What works and what doesn't? How do we balance all of these strategies into a complete youth ministry approach? How can you develop a mission and determine the needs and gifts of your group? Who will the resource people be to help you carry out your ministry mission? What role do youth have in worship? Are mountaintop experiences really necessary for exemplary youth ministry? This segment dissects many ministry options for the candidate and helps them navigate the sea of possibilities for making their ministry one that keeps youth coming back. Candidates are taught how to build a group, keep unity in the midst of conflict, create a team from among youth who attend three or more different schools and develop lasting relationships.

7. Community/Small Group Development...ongoing

- Using covenants to build community
- "Family" group meetings
- Daily worship and devotions

Journaling

Candidates are given opportunities to live out and share in the development of small groups, examining the dynamics of small group development along the way. They experience how small group leadership can positively affect their youth ministry, and ways to build group unity. Family groups are examined and we'll look at ways of integrating family groups into youth ministry. The effect of journaling on youth and group development will be explored and encouraged. Candidates are given ways to help youth and themselves develop good daily worship and devotional habits.

8. Long-range planning...ongoing
 - Developing a youth-friendly congregation
 - Visioning
 - Guiding a group through a process of change
 - Professional and spiritual growth of the youth leader
 - Working with peers in ministry settings
 - Networking

It is imperative that each candidate understand that they are not on this faith journey alone. This segment reinforces the need for developing a team of adult leaders in the congregation as well as having a network of peers to help support not only the candidate's ministry, but the candidate as well. The candidate will be challenged to develop a long-range plan for use with their congregation's ministry. How to create a youth ministry that integrates young people into the life and ministry of the entire congregation and the entire church is a primary focus. A final project is developed during this segment.

The classroom education portion of this course is primarily staffed by seminary faculty, YMCS alumni, youth ministry practitioners and staff. The course director and one coach for every ten candidates are preferable for staffing during this portion of the course.

It is traditional that a worship liturgy of certification and commissioning be conducted to celebrate the completion of the YMCS process. Candidates are encouraged to invite friends, family, and congregational members, including youth, to this service, normally held on the final Friday evening of the course in the seminary chapel.