

From Tu Kahikatea

The starting point for evangelisation is our recognition of the presence of God already in young people, their experiences, their families, and their culture. Evangelisation is our energising core, since everything we do must proclaim the Good News. Our ministry invites the young to deepen their relationship with Jesus and live more fully as his disciples. Evangelisation is an integral part of youth ministry because it:

- proclaims the Good News of Jesus in a way that invites young people to 'come and see'; witnesses to our faith in all aspects of our lives;
- reaches out to young people by meeting them in their various life situations, building relationships, providing care and concern, offering a genuine response to their hungers and needs, and inviting young people to be in relationship with Jesus and the Christian community;
- invites young people personally into the life and mission of the Catholic community;
- calls young people to grow in personal relationship with Jesus, adopting his message and joining the ongoing process of conversion;
- challenges young people to follow Jesus in a life of discipleship – shaping their lives in the vision, values, and teachings of Jesus and living his mission in their daily lives through witness and service;
- invites young people to be evangelisers of others.

Activity

Try this quick activity to help your group think about issues of inclusion, exclusion, and the spiritual practice of hospitality.

Split into small teams of 5-10 people and have each team select someone to be "it." Each team stands in a tight circle, facing in, with their arms around each other. When you say "Go", the "it" person attempts to force their way into the middle of the circle while the circle does everything they can to keep the "it" person out. Call time after a couple of minutes. Debrief quickly, inviting responses from the groups about the experience and what it felt like to be either the person trying to get into the circle or the being the ones trying to keep the person out. Now issue a different challenge, explaining that when you say "Go" each group should work together as quickly as possible to completely surround and envelope the "it" so that he or she is completely hidden from view. It's sort of a group hug with the "it" person concealed in the centre of the circle. Cheer on the groups and award 1000 happy points to the first group to successfully complete the challenge. Finish by asking how this experience may have been different from the first challenge and what sort of emotions it stirred up.

This would be a good activity to help lead into a discussion of your own group's efforts to show welcome to new members, to talk about Jesus' own ministry of welcoming others, or to open a discussion about bullying going on in schools and how young people might respond to this problem from a Christian perspective.

Some Evangelisation Ideas

- 1. Direct Invitation to others in your parish:** Are there lots of young people at your Parish Mass but they aren't coming to youth group? The three most important elements of ministry are **relationship, relationship and relationship**. Ask yourself what programmes did Jesus run? Yep, that's right. He was all about chatting to people he met and extending an invitation to join him. How about having a BBQ right after the Mass that most of the young people go to? Invite young people and their parents to hang out. Challenge regular youth group members to connect with one person who doesn't usually come to youth group. Have a really good event lined up for the following weekend so that your regulars have something to invite the person/people they chat to.
- 2. Welcome event:** At least once a year have an event where you specifically invite people who aren't already part of your group to a "come and see" event. Offer an informal format like a dinner or BBQ. It's always good to have the meeting at a space within your Church facility so guests are gathering somewhere that is familiar to them. It can also be good to have your Parish Priest or somebody else who the group will find interesting at the meeting.
- 3. Reach out to other groups in your parish or community:** Does your parish have multiple groups – maybe organised by age, ethnicity or special interest? Alternatively there might be another parish or church in your area that has a youth group. Why not approach the leaders of another group to have a shared event. This could be a social night or an opportunity for all groups to share their talents and gifts like a talent quest or karaoke night. It's also good to reach out to the family or wider community. How about an evening for parents and teens sharing what is coming up in youth ministry?
- 4. Movie night:** Having a movie night is often a "safe" option for those who are new because they know that they won't have to engage with people too much. One of the DVDs we really like in the Youth Ministry Office is "To Save A Life". It's better for older youth as it covers the story of a student who takes his own life and the journey his fellow students go through afterwards. The story encourages young people to think about who they reach out to and ... who they judge. Check with the Youth Ministry Office if you want to take a look at our copy of the DVD. More tips for a movie night can be found in our online resource at: <http://www.akyouth.org.nz/Res/Resources/Archived%20Seasonal%20Resources/August%202012%20-%20Movie%20night.pdf>. The resource has a link to a list of discussion questions that you can use for your group after you watch To Save A Life.
- 5. Sharing a programme with another church:** Offer a joint programme with other churches. South Auckland churches combine annually for a one-week Servolution Programme. A programme that can be run with other churches is Alpha, an ecumenical evangelisation programme. Find out more at <http://www.alpha.org.nz>.
- 6. Develop an online presence:** Having an online presence can be an easy way for potential participants to interact with you through Facebook or a website. Have existing members develop and share content such as: prayer, scripture, music, announcements about upcoming events and faith testimonies.
- 7. Peer Ministry:** Young people ministering to other young people is known as peer ministry. Some parishes and groups structure their entire ministry programme in a way that provides opportunities for young people to grow in their personal faith and understanding of Church teaching, for community building and for leadership training.
- 8. Create welcome-back events and opportunities:** Most groups have young people who stop coming along to youth group. Create a "welcome back" event each year where you make contact with those who are no longer coming to youth group and invite them to join for that one event. The annual World Youth Day Auckland Experience could be a good event to contact those who have been before and invite them to join your group for the current year's event.