



Big Wonders

YCV ACTIVITY GUIDELINES 2016

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Publications of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 65
The Church and Action

Church Council
Helsinki 2016

The research data in this document is from the quadriannual narratives of the Church, and the data of the international study on confirmation work compiled by the Church Research Institute. The data concerning the YCVs from the four-year reports of 2007 and 2011 were analysed by Saara Huhananntti and Jouko Porkka. The research data gathered from the YCVs as a part of the international study on confirmation work in 2007/2008 and 2012/2013 was analysed by Jouko Porkka.

Translator's notes: There are some quotes from various actors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland throughout the document. These have been translated as is but were originally given in Finnish and thus the translated passages in this document should really not be considered direct quotes.

Also, in some places the document contains local Finnish nicknames for various terms used in YCV activity. It did not feel justifiable to translate them straight-up, so the terms have been given in Finnish in italics with the approximate translation in square brackets. Some English terms specific to the Finnish environment have also been given in Finnish in square brackets.

Big wonders – YCV activity guidelines 2016
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Church Education and Family Matters
FELC publications 65
The Church and Action

Recommendations, instructions and guidelines
Tasknumber DKIR/391/06.02/2016
Accepted in the plenary session of the Church Council 1/28/2016

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A warm thanks to those YCVs and employees, who participated in producing this document in the regional seminars in 2015. We'd also like to thank the adolescents and employees from the Michael's parish in Helsinki for participating in the illustration of this document.

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ISBN 978-951-789-598-9 (PAPERBACK)
ISBN 978-951-789-599-6 (ONLINE)
ISSN 2341-9393 (PRINT)
ISSN 2341-9407 (ONLINE)

Grano
Kuopio, 2018



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Welcome to witness wonders!

God has created us just the way we are, both you and me. We are wonders, as groups and as individuals. In this universe we are allowed to live this singular moment that shall never again be repeated. That is a wonder. That is beyond our comprehension. We can only surmise something essential: the value of life and humanity.

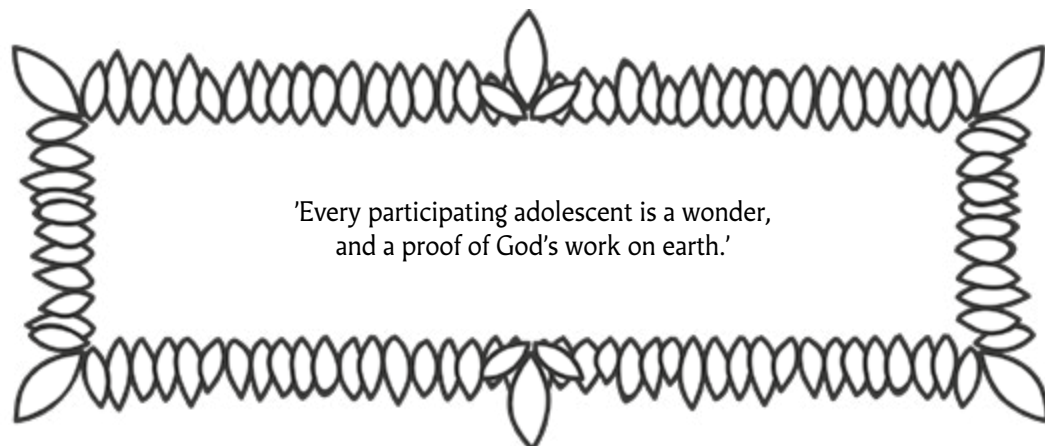
Christ is a wonder. His significance as the conqueror of death and the paragon of life is wondrous. Congregation is also a wonder. It embodies the work of God in this world. Congregation lives and breathes from generation to generation, changes, adapts, develops – and embodies Christ's mercy and God's love in this world, always to new people. In the congregation of Christ, there is room for all kinds and all ages to be and grow in connection with one another and God.

Faith is a wonder. It is a mystery not reliant of man but a gift from our creator. In the face of all these wonders there is room for more marvelling: confirmation training is a wonder and young church volunteer (ycv) activity is a wonder. Every participating adolescent is a wonder and a proof of God's work on Earth.

An adolescent in the 2010s has many doubts concerning his worth and adequacy. Am I good enough? Does anyone find me important and wonderful? Does anyone love me? The core of the message of the Church has a countercultural ring to it. There is no need to prove oneself. There's no need to change and look good to feel adequate and wanted. The message of the Church to those seeking acceptance is clear: He, your Creator, has intended that you be just the way you are – and called you to his fellowship.

'I am a wonder' refers to the words of psalm 139 about the value of man. An adolescent is wonderful. They are valuable and important in the happy times in life when all goes well – but also in all the rough and difficult phases. The adolescent as an individual is important and interesting. Always.

Simultaneously they are a part of a community – their own group and congregation. There's always a place for them and a call to experience togetherness with other people and God not only during the confirmation time and ycv activity, but also afterwards, for their whole life. They are a big wonder. We are in touch with big wonders daily.



Preface

Confirmation training in Finland has been developed based on the proven practices from the everyday activities of the parishes. As years have passed this has led to the development of a form of activity, which successfully combines the general outlines followed by the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) with the special nature of the local activity. 'Big wonders' -guidelines are a part of the confirmation training reform implemented in 2016–2018. Confirmation training and young church volunteer (ycv) activity are linked together and affect one another. Thus it seems logical to not consider them separately, but to also link their general outlines and to plan both at the same table with the same team.

YCV activity has grown into the most encompassing form of post-confirmation church youth work. It has become a part of Finnish youth culture just like the confirmation time. Tens of thousands of adolescents have wanted to take part in providing new confirmands with a congenial, unforgettable experience, which many of them have already personally experienced.

The appeal of the confirmation time and the enthusiasm of the new ycv's has lured the parishes into training ever more ycv's in ever lengthier training programs. This is to be understood as a fruit of its time. But even though ycv training is popular, young congregation is fundamentally not a training community and not all adolescents want the post of a ycv. Over the extensive ycv training period, some adolescents drop out of the training course. This shouldn't cause a complete loss of parish connection.

The first national guidelines for ycv activity were set in 2004 in the document 'Sopivan kokoinen iso' ('A big brother or sister just big enough'). In some places the guidelines defined here abide by the document. In 2004 ycv activity was primarily considered from the point of view of confirmation work only briefly regarding other aspects of the whole, such as the opportunities that being a ycv opens up in the parish. The aim of the 'Big wonders' -guidelines is to specifically emphasise the broader perspective: ycv activity is much more than just a ycv training course and being a ycv in a confirmation group. Ycv also act as club leaders, service assistants, and volunteers in projects of diaconia work and various other tasks. Some of the ycv's have

their gifts or motivation directed towards pursuits other than confirmation work or camps, and parish connection has to involve more than just performance-centric training. The 'Big wonders' -guidelines endorse that the parishes should strive to adopt a broader perspective of the ycv activity.

A realisation took place in parishes and the Church in general in the 2010s at the latest. It seems like the maturing ycv's, after many active years in ycv activity, have trouble finding a place of their own in the adult parish. Usually this phase in life is linked to moving out of home, beginning one's studies, and in general beginning a more independent life.

Church membership is not automatic even for those young adults, who have been active members of their local parish for years and enthusiastically sought out positions of responsibility. In many regards, the ycv's of today have a different way of believing and expressing their faith from the ycv's of the last decade. The importance of spirituality in an adolescent's life and at their homes is in a flux. This also brings up a key question in ycv activity: how to reinforce both, the adolescent's experience of the parish and the church as their own spiritual community, and the meaning of faith in the adolescents and adults' lives?

The structure of the church is also in flux. Parish mergers are commonplace; an adolescent's familiar local parish might disappear. New, larger parishes create new opportunities for cooperation but also new challenges. In merged parishes, there's the question of how to treat all ycv's equally. It requires shared, planned methods and agreements. There's also a need for discourse on the contents: what are the adolescents to experience and learn in ycv activity?

All these things speak of things being in flux. There are changes taking place in the society and the structures of the parishes, the goals and foci of the ycv training courses, and there's an increase in the overall diversity of the contents of ycv activity in general. Further, young adults tend to have particularly frail parish connection and it is increasingly common to leave the church. All these background factors highlight the need to re-examine and re-outline ycv activity. The 'Big wonders' -document strives to provide tools for assessing the activity, and guidelines for developing ycv activity in the parishes.



BIG WONDERS -GUIDELINES ARE INTENDED TO

- set common outlines for ycv activity
- support parishes and Christian NGOs in developing the local activity

YCV ACTIVITY [*isostoiminta*] in these guidelines broadly refers to activities gathering and mobilising ycv's [*isonen*]. ycv activity is a place for an adolescent to grow in, where learning is a part of being together and belonging to the congregation of the Christ. Thus ycv activity can be any shared being and doing, from playing and messing around to making music, training or conversation to worship life or diaconal service.

YCV TRAINING [*isokoulutus*] in these guidelines, following the 'Sopivan kokoinen iso' -guidelines, refers to that part of ycv activity that intentionally strives to improve the adolescent's competence and expertise to a level that enables them to perform their various future responsibilities. These responsibilities may include i.a. leading various group tasks, the practical tasks of a confirmation camp or the ability to deal with the relationships matters bound to come up in confirmation work reasonably for their age.

THE THEOLOGY OF YCV ACTIVITY leans on the godparenthood customs in early Christianity. As most people were baptised as adults in early Christianity, every baptised person was indicated a kind of support person in the congregation. The support person was to guide the baptised one receiving baptismal education to the secrets of the congregation and faith. Nobody was left to tread the road of a Christian alone, but everybody was accompanied by a reliable escort. The theological concept of ycvhood is very close to that of godparenthood in early Christianity.

The spiritual forebears of a ycv can also be found in the disciples of Jesus. Ordinary men from Galilee were given a commission, which is, humanly thought, completely unreasonable. They were to bear the responsibility of carrying the message of Christ to the whole world. Simultaneously their calling reveals the mercy of God. They were sinners and in all ways incomplete people. They were selected as such and such they were also allowed to remain all the while carrying out God's Great Commission.

THE MAIN GOAL OF YCV ACTIVITY

ycv activity strengthens an adolescent's in their faith in a triune god and equips them for life as a Christian.

THE THESES OF YCV ACTIVITY

- *An adolescent is a wonder. The premise of ycv activity is that the adolescent be and mature just the way they are.*
- *ycv is a part of the young crew in the parish. An important part of ycv activity is safety, connection, joy, and the experience of being noticed.*
- *There's room for all kinds of adolescents in ycv activity. Everyone is welcome regardless of their personal reasons.*
- *The competence and expertise needed as a ycv is gained through both, participation in parish life and training.*
- *ycvs plan and implement the activity together with the employees.*
- *ycv activity builds a bridge towards being an adult parishioner.*

Big wonders –guidelines are thematically split into three parts. The first part of the guidelines considers the various kinds of ycv's that research has brought to light, and how to best support the different adolescents' personal growth in the parish. How to increase the adolescents' involvement? What is required of the parish? What should an employee be aware of? What do the different needs of the adolescents mean for ycv activity?

The broad middle part of the guidelines delves deep into the ycv as a parishioner, and how to structure ycv activity and training around the adolescents. What kinds of structures are most frequently and mostly functionally used in ycv training? This part also scrutinises the questions related to ycvhood in confirmation work.

The final part of this document considers the challenges created by the unique nature of the adolescent's experience in the young congregation and as a ycv. How to reinforce the bridge that leads from young congregation to finding one's own place in the parish as an adult?

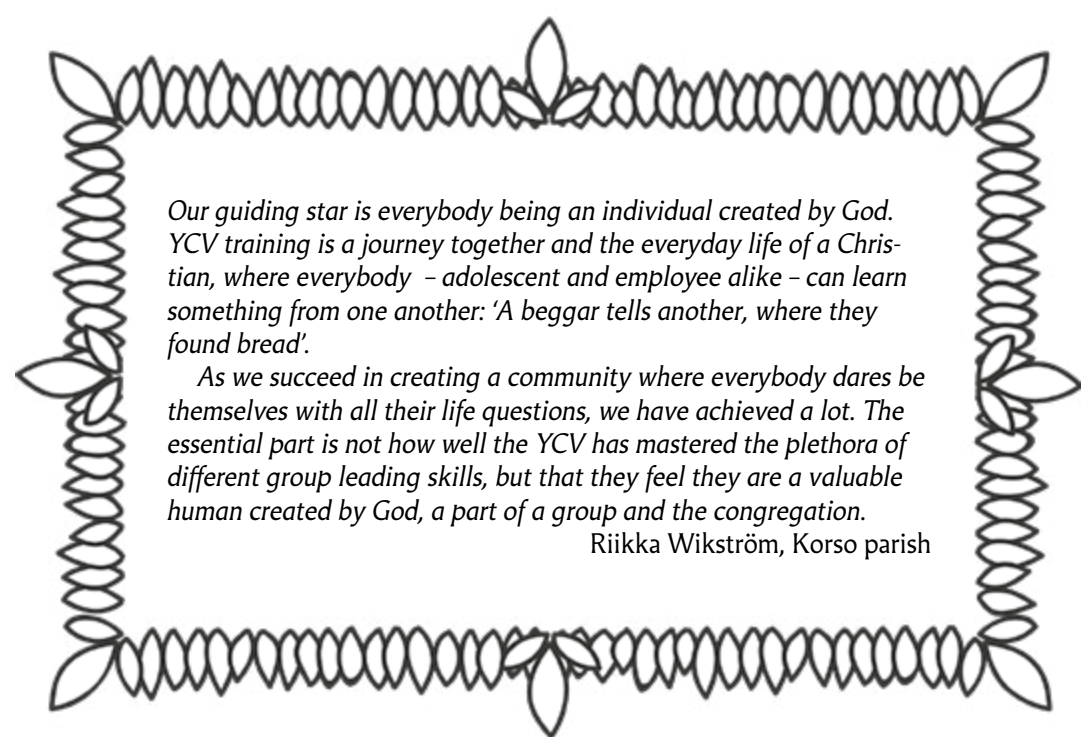


YCVS OF ALL SORTS

ycv activity is a wonder. It is an amazing success story. It reaches approximately 24,000 adolescents every year and simultaneously touches their families.

A majority of the ycv's are 16–17-year old adolescents, who are in middle of the process of slowly becoming independent and searching for their own way of life. It is common in that age cohort to have a critical view of school and other institutions. In spite of that they, enthusiastically and voluntarily, gravitate towards parish activity, which is quite heavy on training for those aiming to be ycv's.

In ycv activity, many find the experience of belonging in a group in the congregation of Christ. By being serious about the idea of the congregation as Christ's body being a community for all kinds of people regardless of their skills, faith or personality, we are making room for every adolescent. Jesus calls and sends everybody, not just the skilled and not just one specific type, but everybody.



Our guiding star is everybody being an individual created by God. YCV training is a journey together and the everyday life of a Christian, where everybody – adolescent and employee alike – can learn something from one another: 'A beggar tells another, where they found bread'.

As we succeed in creating a community where everybody dares be themselves with all their life questions, we have achieved a lot. The essential part is not how well the YCV has mastered the plethora of different group leading skills, but that they feel they are a valuable human created by God, a part of a group and the congregation.

Riikka Wikström, Korso parish

Why does an adolescent get into ycv training?

An adolescent, who thinks about becoming a ycv during their confirmation time, might not think about the impact the ycv activity has on the church or the society. Potentially they might not even think about their own personal growth. To them it's mostly a matter of what the participation requires and what they might get out of it. So what motivates them?

While studying the motivations of the different ycv's, four rough categories have been discovered. There may be representatives of each type among the ycv's of a confirmation group.

DIVERSELY MOTIVATED YCVS participate in ycv activity for a myriad of reasons: the spiritual contents, social contacts, and self-development. They are equally motivated to be a ycv by both, the desire to be of help and to provide the confirmands with a pleasant confirmation time, and the desire to form contacts and be together with the other ycv's and the employees.

About a third of the ycv's fall under this type and they are slightly more likely to be girls than boys. They have been active in parish activity already in their childhood more often than the average ycv. This activity also continues during their ycvhood. The characteristic of this group also include an above average openness towards other religions and multiculturalism. They also want come to know people from other religions and consider immigration a net positive for Finland.

SOCIALLY MOTIVATED YCVS are primarily motivated by their desire to be together with the other ycv's, confirmands, and employees. They are enthusiastic about helping others and supporting their juniors in their personal growth. While they have little interest in spiritual and theological themes, they have nothing against them either.

This group includes almost half of the ycv's and they are slightly more likely to be boys than girls. These ycv's have experienced below average participation in parish activities in their childhood. As ycv's they are less active in the parish, in reading the Bible, and praying than the average ycv.

SPIRITUALLY MOTIVATED YCVS are primarily drawn to ycv activity by spiritual reasons. They are the most likely group to pray, read the Bible, and listen to spiritual music, and they are the most likely to support the traditional Christian interpretation and ethics. Matters concerning their personal growth and non-theological contents are of little interest to them. This group is slightly weighted towards boys.

The spiritually motivated make up a total of about 13 per cent of all the ycv's. They have experienced above average Christian participation in their childhood. The other distinctive feature of this group is that they tend to be socially timid: they have no desire to feel communality or be a part of a group. Indeed, such circumstances can even cause them anxiety.

POORLY MOTIVATED YCVS are characterized by passive orientation towards ycv activity. They seem to expect practically nothing out of being a ycv. They are also generally speaking religiously passive and thus have little interest in questions concerning faith.

About 12 per cent of the ycv's belong in this category, an approximately equal share of boys and girls. As in childhood, they also have below average participation rates in parish during their time as ycv's. They also pray little and seldom read the Bible compared to the average. They also hardly listen to spiritual music. When asked for their reasons for participation, they have a hard time giving any.



WHAT IF...

- ... we started the autumn with the ycv's by pondering the things that inspired them to come aboard? There could be another session around the same theme later in the year. What are the inspiring aspects? What about the taxing ones? What are the adolescents' desires and needs?
- ... we brought the adolescents along into the planning of the activity so that it would cater to everybody's desires and contain many exciting aspects?
- ... we as employees focused on giving heed to all those who have hopped aboard so that even the wavering ones were encouraged to continue?



How to pay heed to adolescents' varying needs?

For most adolescents, confirmation training and ycv activity are both periods of rapid growth and development, where thinking expands, the desire to do good unto others grows, and spirituality deepens. Many adolescents talk about their confirmation time as a turning point dividing life into pre- and post-confirmation phases.

Each adolescent has their own strengths. ycv activity and the ycv's personal growth and development can be structured upon these strengths giving them a positive sense. A ycv team of ycv's with different strengths could be formed for a confirmation group. Each ycv could be given tasks based on their aptitudes. Everybody benefits: the confirmation group and the ycv team function better, and there are less unnecessary disappointments and conflicts. In this way the ycv's can also act as peer teachers and peer learners while doing things they are naturally aligned towards.

However, the so-called 'Matthew-effect' seems to also apply in ycv activity. The term refers to the verse in the Gospel of Matthew: 'For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath' (Matt 25:29). According to studies the adolescents with strong Christian childhood upbringing and those, who were active in the parish in childhood, become ycv's after their confirmation time significantly more frequently than the others.

These adolescents also continue as ycv's longer than the others and they seem to get more out of the experience. Compared to the other ycv's, they seem to learn more about the parish and worship life, but also more new things about religion, themselves, God, and the Bible, as well as topics related to other religions. Their attitudes towards these topics also shifted significantly more towards the positive than on average. If the Matthew-effect is acknowledged, the activity should especially be geared towards motivating and supporting those, whose upbringing was more or less bereft of religion. Similarly, a restless person or a slower learner might need special support and encouragement from the employee to be able and willing to continue.

Each adolescent challenges the employee notably with their individuality. Motivation and skills do not always go hand in hand. An enthusiastic person might be less skilled: a skilled accompanist might e.g. have little spiritual motivation. A particularly religious adolescent might know more about the Bible than the employee and challenge him ecclesiastically, or come from a very different revivalist movement background and making questions based on e.g. differences in doctrine.

Some ycv's need significantly more attention and support than the others. It is of course easy to work with enthusiastic and skilled ycv's. On the flipside, e.g. poorly motivated ycv's with meagre gifts might be on some level especially demanding or particularly non-independent, and they need heavier involvement from the employee. Even so, or perhaps for that very reason, every ycv has a place in ycv activity no matter how much support they require. One of an employee's important tasks is to be there as support and encouragement for those adolescents, who need it.

It's important that ycv activity is not only composed of the most gifted, active adolescents with the most positive orientation towards religion, but that there's room for everybody. This means that everybody has an actual place and nobody is set aside and left feeling as they were the filling, or invisible, or a constant target of negative attention.

A group composed of different ycv's also informs the confirmands of the parish being a place, where incompleteness is condoned. Every person needs a place of acceptance and mercy for their own humanity. As a consequence of successful forming of a group and with just the right amount of support different ycv's can shine in their tasks. Everyone is allowed to be growing.

Four mirrors for ycv activity

How to estimate whether there's room for different ycv's locally? 'Sopivan kokoinen iso' –guidelines in 2004 brought up the kinds of potential skews in the ycv structure that enable the parish or organization to reflect on their own ycv activity.

ycv's group as a whole and for example a particular confirmation group can first be viewed through the lens of **GENDER**. If the ycv team is mostly composed of girls, eyes can be turned towards the reasons for the current state of things, and which, if any, changes are then necessary. What kind of being is valued? Is there space for many ways of being, different temperaments, and varying interests?

The other mirror is related to **AGE**. If ycv's have all been in training for at least two years, sufficiently experienced and skilled, how is it possible to simultaneously communicate that the parish has place for growing, incomplete, and occasionally



even deficient people? If on the other hand almost all the ycv's are young first timers, how to pass on the message that religion is the kind of thread of life and parish such a fellowship that remains throughout life?

The third mirror reflects **SPIRITUALITY**. If the ycv's are mostly strong in faith, what kind of message does that bear about condoning incompleteness and seeking in ycv activity? If there are few or no ycv's interested in religious matters, that's also an important point for consideration. What kind of spirituality is the adolescent expected and hoped to be strengthened in? Is it completely out of touch with the adolescent's reality?

The fourth mirror is linked to the ycv's **REALITY OF LIFE**. If a group of ycv's only includes high school students or people aiming towards high school, what does that tell of ycv activity? What needs to be changed so that other adolescents would also feel welcome? Is there room for those adolescents with time-consuming hobbies? How can the adolescent participate in ycv activity and simultaneously realise their calling in this world?

WHAT IF...

- ... we saw the ycv's' different personalities, backgrounds, and reasons to participate in ycv activity as richness?
- ... we saw the adolescents as maturing people, to whom we employees are honoured to be allowed to offer support and shelter?
- ... we consciously put effort into ensuring that the time and attention is available to those needing special guidance?
- ...we looked at our ycv's both, at the beginning and the end of ycv activity, and while selecting the ycv's for the confirmation groups to see how many kinds of images they reflect of the adolescents in the parish?

One epiphany in our parish was linked to the fact that an adolescent in ycv training does not just learn a ycv's tasks, but every adolescent is allowed to grow in the parish fellowship as they are. The educational content of ycv activity is just a small part of this growing. The youth work of the parish is not just ycv training. There's open activity, adolescents' evenings, clubs, theatre-, singing-, and instrument playing groups also for those not interested in being a ycv.

Sari Kokkonen, Hakunila parish

YCVHOOD - A PLACE FOR GROWTH

Participating in ycv activity can offer significant support to an adolescent's positive growth and development. Adolescents develop at their own pace. There can be as much as five years of difference in physical development between individual adolescents. However, physical maturing does not necessarily go hand in hand with psychological development and emotional maturation. ycv's include both, those in the same stage of development as the confirmands, and those who have already reached early adulthood.



In an adolescent's development, biological, psychological, and emotional development interact. The consecutive stages of development are influenced by the adolescent's own needs as much as their environment. A central part of the development in adolescence is building a personal identity and seeking an answer to the question 'Who am I and what can I be?'

New ycv's are accompanied by older ycv's and employees. In a community supporting the adolescents' growth, the role of safe, reliable adults is essential. It is important that the adolescents' community carries an air of comfort and congeniality, where everybody is welcome with their own questions and in their own developmental stages. The employees' behaviour setting an example in this regard is crucial. Everybody being accepted the way they are is the radical promise of the Christian congregation.

Safe congregation

The central goal of both, confirmation training and ycv activity, is that the adolescents experience safety, sanctity, happiness, and connection. Confirmation training and ycv activity are successful when this goal is realised. ycv activity is to be safe for the adolescents on all levels. It means respecting an individual and their boundaries on all humane levels: physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, sexually, and socially.

To the employee the ideal of safe congregations means awareness of their power and responsibility. It means awareness of the risk of manipulation and abuse of power, and consciously putting effort into removing them. From the employee's point of view this means that if necessary, they are to be prepared to change their ways of working, and to intervene in cases of misbehaviour.

A congregation, which is mentally, emotionally, and socially safe, is a community a person may enter and where they may stay with full knowledge of the fact that they will be respected, loved, and protected just the way they are. There should be no need to hide their characteristics, circumstances, sexual orientation, position, or appearance. There is no need to show off with morality or religiousness. It is a safe place.

It is obvious that parish activity is to be sexually safe on the physical level. Sexual abuse and crossing boundaries comes in many forms and also occurs between adolescents. Unfortunately all of it never comes to light. It is natural that ideals aren't always realised among maturing adolescents. The employee should get used to talking about boundaries with the adolescents, and to clear up situations, where boundaries have been crossed. Occasionally the event is serious enough to be considered a crime making it a police matter.

Employees are absolutely, juridically bound by the requirement for physical sexual safety.

Sexual safety also covers the way in which things are talked about. What kinds of jokes are made about what? Is it allowed to call people gay or other sexual slurs? It's good to talk about acceptable language and humour with the adolescents. Similarly it's also a good idea to cover the topic of touching. There's a clear difference between a good touch and bad touch, and people experience situations differently. Everybody has a right to their boundaries. Common rules and respecting others'

boundaries are important topics for conversations, as are the means to withdraw from a situation where e.g. the manner of speech or touch feels unpleasant.

A safe congregation presupposes a sufficient understanding of gender sensitivity. It's important to relinquish the traditional ways to label men and women, girls and boys. People and their identities are more complex than our labels. The differences within a gender can be greater than those between genders. Words can exclude people imperceptibly and without any particular ill intent. It is important to consciously pay heed to the fact that the adolescents, their families, and their realities really are diverse, and we in the church want to exclude nobody.

Spiritual abuse is interwoven into mental and social violence. It can e.g. take the form threatening or intimidating in the name of God, spiritual manipulation, or forcing somebody to do something with the pain of social rejection and abandonment. A subtler form of spiritual violence might involve considering somebody a sinner or inferior – or too religious. It can take the form of isolation, ostracism, forgetting to ask the victim to join in, knowing glances, or looking past them.

Spiritual safety should also be considered with regards to the worship life. What is a safe service of worship and what are safe devotionals? What kind of insecurity, anxiety, and unease might they cause an adolescent? What things could help an adolescent feel safer in a service? How could we decrease the risk of making a mistake, and create an air of acceptance in services? How could we give space for experiments even if those occasionally lead to going overboard or making mistakes? How could we arrange a service so that an adolescent feels accepted and noticed? It is a good idea to ask about the adolescents' experiences, listen to them, and take them seriously.

Breaches in social safety are particularly associated with bullying and ostracism, which can occur in all circles of the parish, in peer groups, and even in the relationship between an adult and an adolescent. The act is often quite well hidden and rather clever in a way. The bullies are not always even aware of the fact that they are indeed bullying. How can we in ycv activity actively seek means to prevent and to intervene in the different forms of bullying and ostracism?

A safe parish and ycv community form a fruitful soil for an adolescent's growth. Safety is built with many small steps, e.g. a friendly glance and courtesy. In a safe spiritual community, an adolescent has positive relationships with adults outside home; they can learn ethical thinking and responsibility, and improve their well-being. Improving their well-being also pre-empts risks related to feeling down like substance abuse.



WHAT IF...

- ... the ground rules for ycv activity and confirmation training were compiled on a case-by-case basis ensuring that all kind of safety is taken care of?
- ... the ycv's were considered from the safety perspective with emphasis on the child and adolescent's right to safety?
- ... we had round table discussions with the adolescents and employees about the course of action to take if one experiences harassment, bullying, or a lack of safety in ycv activity?

What is involvement in ycv activity?

One important direction for the development of ycv activity is to focus on the adolescent themselves, their growth and needs instead of focusing on education. ycv activity is designed to support the adolescents in their personal growth, to help them find their own natural ways of becoming active, voluntary agents in the parish. This is possible by consciously supporting the adolescents' involvement.

Involvement is a matter of how the adolescent can participate in defining, realising, and evaluating the work being done to ensure that their interests are satisfied. The opportunity to participate in handling such matters in a personally significant community is critical for the development of a person's identity. It is a matter of one of the fundamental requirements of growth and development. Through involvement we learn to live together.

Involvement is both, acting and influencing, and belonging in a group. Particularly important kind of involvement is experiencing togetherness –that there be a place for me. That I can emotionally experience belonging in a group. Reinforcing the adolescent's agency and involvement can be accomplished through e.g. including



them in the planning of the activity, supporting and reinforcing their aptitudes (by e.g. supporting, and by enabling them to accumulate skills and expertise), and giving them the right amount of responsibility.

Employees are to give active consideration to what exactly an adolescent's involvement in the parish entails. What does it mean regarding the loosely associated adolescents, and what about the superactive ones? What are the conditions for involvement accounting for the adolescent's stage of development – how to give each adolescent the right amount of responsibility while still giving them enough space to be a part of the group without stress? Which of the mechanics of the parish prevent an adolescent's involvement?

Active and skilled adolescents are often very visibly involved as they know how to take their place. But involvement is much more than visible, active agency and concrete tasks. Principally involvement refers to the experience of being allowed to determine one's own roles, wishes, and needs. One oneself is allowed to plan and evaluate: 'What should I, and what do I want to choose? What is important to me? Where do I come from and in which direction do I want to go? What is my parishionership to me first as (a club member, then as) a confirmand, a YCV, and an adult? What am I and what do I want to become in each of these roles? What do I need and wish of my parishionership? In which direction do I want for it to develop? What do I myself want to develop into?' It is a good idea to encourage the adolescents to think about their own wishes and needs, and to express them.

An adolescent's involvement can also be reinforced through challenging them to active consideration and self-evaluation concerning YCV activity. It is a good idea to challenge the adolescents to set their own goals for YCV activity: 'What do I get out of this? What have I received and learned by the end of my time in YCV activity? What do I consciously want to learn about myself, others, God, and the church? What skills do I want to learn and in what areas do I want to improve myself?'

However, it is also an adolescent's right to participate in the activity without their own special goals. Involvement isn't just doing but it's also being and receiving.



WHAT IF ...

- ... we thought about means to further enhance the adolescents' involvement in the parish and its YCV activity? What obstacles do we recognize inhibiting the adolescents' involvement? How do we remove these obstacles?
- ... we sought means to reinforce involvement particularly in those adolescents, who seem to experience little or none of it?

Learning happens together

Learning and development happen not in a vacuum but always with people, whether it be a broad or narrow community, a lifelong learning environment, or a mere brief social situation. The YCV groups of a parish are also communities, where learning occurs both consciously and subliminally.

Successful YCV activity offers an adolescent a channel through which to get to know new people and form intimate, enduring friendships. These relationships are also important for learning as adolescents acquire much crucial competence and expertise for YCV activity from one another, and especially the more experienced YCVs. This kind of social learning is occasionally much more efficient than learning in an employee-lead environment on a formal YCV training course.

Many YCVs describe the adolescents' community in a parish as one giant ball of friends, where everybody gets along and nobody is bullied or ostracised. Occasionally confirmation training and YCV activity can mark a key turning point in preventing social marginalisation and an adolescent's exclusion. This is a wonderful thing worth a hefty investment. Yet, occasionally YCV activity is also described as a mass of adolescents divided into various, exclusive cliques often by age.

For adolescents, YCV activity is a space, where their own identity, values, moral, notions of the church, religion, faith, and living as a Christian constantly develop in interaction with one another. This process is not isolated from other areas in life, but also touches the adolescent's family. Family support for the adolescent's YCV activity is important. Therefore consideration should be given to how to factor the family in while organising YCV activity. Many parents are certain to be interested in what happens during YCV activity, and where its contents are weighted. YCVs' families should be invited to participate in adolescents' events, perhaps occasionally even to plan and implement them. Consecration of the YCVs could be a family celebration. An adolescent's years as a YCV could be an opportunity to get acquainted with the whole family and invite them all to participate in the activities of the parish.

Families should also be remembered in the prayers in YCV activity. Simultaneously it is important to consciously account for the countless different circumstances and families, many with much brokenness. The parish shall never be a place where the adolescent should hide or be ashamed of their own background. The parish employee may occasionally be the only or the most important safe adult in an adolescent's life.



WHAT IF...

- ... we consciously arranged YCV activity so that the older YCVs could guide their juniors and share their experience in the various tasks?
- ... we prioritised a strong feeling of togetherness and acceptance over acquiring competence and expertise?
- ... we thought about how YCV activity could support an adolescent's relationship to their family, but also them gradually becoming independent?
- ... we discussed the contents and practices related to YCV activity with the YCVs' parents?
- ... we invited families – parents, but also siblings – along to the various events of the YCV activity, such as the consecration of YCVs, and we prayed for them?

How to support growth?

An adolescent will grow in many ways over their years in YCV activity. Emotional, interactional, and cognitive skills all tend to improve significantly. The adolescent also has the opportunity to learn many new practical skills. Simultaneously the adolescent's confidence in his own ability to handle challenging situations can improve significantly.

Self-confidence improves when the adolescent receives encouragement and reinforcement from adults and other adolescents, and notices that they can manage social situations and acting as a leader of a group. YCV activity often expands an adolescent's interpersonal network and they tend to have an increasingly positive attitude towards other people, their own home, school, and the whole society.

YCV activity is also meaningful in a broader, social sense. According to the studies, participating adolescents' thinking changes significantly during YCV activity. E.g. their desire to help people in weaker positions increases, and they have a stronger desire to influence the correction of the various injustices they perceive in the society.

In YCV activity, an adolescent learns tools for ethical thinking, and learns to respect the diverse rules set by the society. They learn to confront the difference and diversity around them, and to respect it. While working with other adolescents and adults, and e.g. while pondering the questions of loving one's neighbour, the adolescent develops their sympathy and empathy skills.

Research shows that in any activity supporting an adolescent's development usually contains four features, which are useful for growth. Their realisation in YCV activity should also be seen to. These features are as follows...

The responsible adults should hold a positive attitude towards the adolescent.

The contact between the adult and the adolescent should be enduring. In YCV activity this means i.a. that there should be as little switching of employees as possible. Research does show, however, that an adolescent already benefits of a positive half-year long adult-adolescent-relationship.

Activity supporting adolescents' development should challenge the adolescents to exit their comfort zone to learn and try out new skills. In the context of YCV activity e.g. performing, presenting oneself, leading a group, planning and implementing the program of confirmation work, planning and implementing devotionals, etc.

The adolescent should be offered the opportunity to act not just as participants, but also as leaders. They should be offered responsibility. It is good to already include the adolescents in the planning stages.

Faith also develops

Spiritual and religious growth is a segment of a human's development. They go hand in hand with the other aspects of an adolescent's maturing. Changes in thinking, interactional skills, and emotional life also reflect upon spiritual growth for their parts. Religious growth is not restricted to just cognitive thinking or the understanding of theological dogmata and not even to emotional religious experiences, but it is holistically linked together with the whole spectrum of development.

Religious development best occurs in an environment where there are people of different ages together. The development is based on peer relationships, where eve-

ry participant is both, a giver and a receiver. It is important that YCV activity offer a place and the opportunity to share one's own realisations and experiences about faith.

Adolescents want to live together and rejoice of friendship. The same need also exists in adults. Both adolescents and adults yearn for a community in their life, one where they could find relationships or a place of their own through voluntary work. It is good to build paths towards adult spiritual life in lieu of YCV activity. It has been discovered that belonging in a religious community helps adolescents respect those from other religious nominations, develops skills for religious dialogue, and socialises adolescents to bear global responsibility.

Based on studies, a good environment for religious growth is one, where worship- and devotional life is experienced together. The activities should include activity, creativity, positive friendships, caring adults, responsibility, safety, education in ethics, and rules. YCV activity is, at its best, just this kind of environment. Simultaneously, the typical age of YCVs comes with the need to question and doubt matters. YCV activity should also have a place for that. An adolescent should have a place just the way they are.



WHAT IF...

...we looked at the semester plan of YCV activity through the lens of how it provides tools for adolescents in different phases of their religious growth?

...we asked the active adolescents, which things in faith fill them with suspicion, interest, and comfort?

...we offered spiritual companionship to everybody, and particularly to the seekers?

...YCVs encountered parishioners of different ages to especially consider matters of faith?

Good YCV activity is a whole

Minding adolescent's development and supporting it in a parish influences the planning, orientation, and implementation of YCV activity. Rather than just focusing on the educational content and training, the attention should be focused on time spent together with the YCVs and the contents of that time.

An employee can contribute to making the parish a good environment for the adolescent's growth in many ways.

Special attention should be paid to encountering the adolescents. Unstructured free time with the adolescents is just as valuable as structured activity. At their best, an employee is a key adult outside home, one with great importance for an adolescent's development.

YCV activity should ensure that there is a place for different kinds of faith and experiences of faith. It means allowing different religious views including scepticism, and encouraging asking questions so that nobody needs to pretend, or to hide their own thoughts.

YCV activity should have an encouraging atmosphere with room for different reasons to participate. Timid and loosely associated YCVs should be given special attention. The



THE TREE ANALOGY FOR RELIGIOUS GROWTH

American religious pedagogue and minister John Westerhoff uses the growth of a tree as an analogy for the different stages of a person's religious development. According to him, faith grows like a tree – four rings of the tree are the nested layers of religious development.

The core of the tree is **EXPERIENCED FAITH**, which can be reinforced by interaction containing acceptance, trust, and love. This core grows when the parish contains room for creativity, care, and experiencing faith.

The second layer of the tree is **AFFILIATED FAITH**, where the emphasis lies on finding a place to call one's own in the faith community. Affiliated faith grows stronger, when one feels desired, needed, and accepted as a part of the parish.

The third layer is **SEARCHING FAITH**, where one by doubt and critical thinking searches for a personal understanding of the meaning and purpose of both, faith and congregation.

When there is freedom in the parish to search together with other seekers, the tree can grow and strengthen towards the fourth layer, **OWNED FAITH**. Owned faith is described by being a Christian holistically as a way of doing, thinking, and experiencing.

Even though trees vary in size, there's no qualitative difference between them: a small tree is just as much a tree as a larger one. The difference is only in size. The growing of faith does not mean it becoming qualitatively better but rather better matching the changing needs of a growing person.

The prerequisite for the tree's balanced and healthy growth is a suitable environment without which it can never reach its full measure. Regardless of the environment however, growth does take place, just at a different pace.

A growing tree does not relinquish its previous rings, but a new layer is built on top of the old. No phase can be skipped, but everyone has to go through all of them. The growth of faith always includes the earlier phases: we never grow out of our old kind of faith and the needs linked to that, but the new kind with its new needs and elements is added on top of the old layer.

If the needs of the old layer are no longer being met, individuals tend to return to the older phase. When these needs are again satisfied, the individual returns onto the expanded layer of faith.

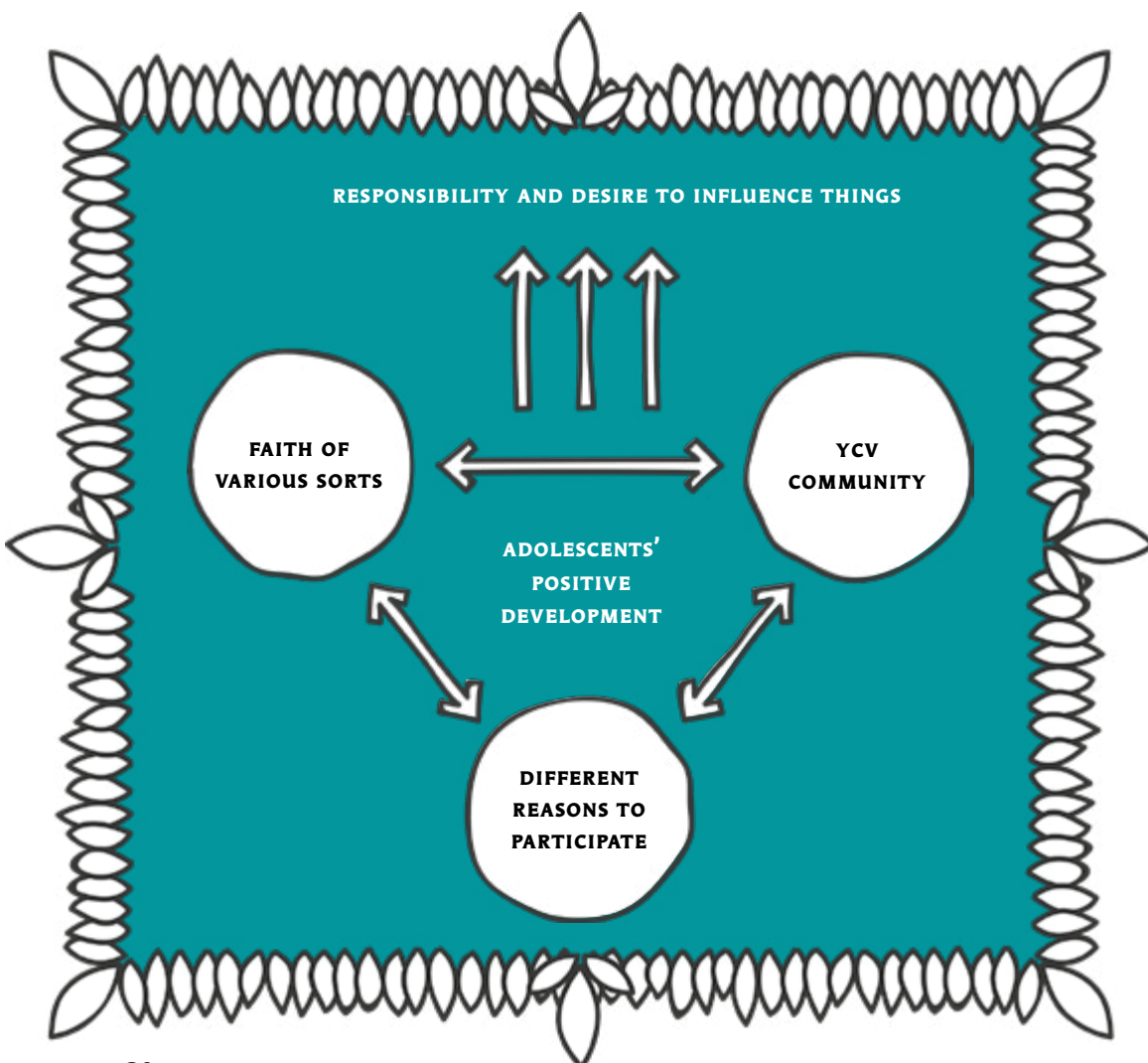


long-term participants should not be forgotten either: it is important to challenge them with new, greater responsibilities to prevent YCV groups from breaking into cliques. New YCVs have a hard time joining in if the more experienced ones are handling all tasks as routine. There should be room for experimentation and altering habits.

In all sorts of situations power and responsibility should be given to the YCV themselves. In YCV activity the employee stays in the background letting the YCVs' ideas, and actions take the centre stage. This does not mean that the employee ought to leave the YCVs by themselves but rather that they be constantly available as backup. It is interesting to note that many of the important decision-makers of our society have a background in YCV activity. Many former YCVs praise the parish and its activity especially for them being allowed to bear responsibility and learn from it.

In successful YCV activity the YCVs are the subjects. This makes everyone involved – both as the givers and the receivers.

The enabling of adolescents' growth can be modelled with the *triangle figure* (Jouko Porkka).



Where in the figure do you place the employee's place and role? How would the YCV activity in your parish appear if you looked at it from the three points of the triangle? In what ways is adolescents' positive development thus enabled in your parish?



WHAT IF...

...the employee consciously encouraged and supported the adolescents and ensured that this happen for every adolescent?

...the employee gave adolescents responsibilities to match their expertise and skills in training and activity?

...situations calling to dialog with people thinking and believing in different ways were organised for the adolescents?

...one didn't always need to grow, have energy, and participate – sometimes it were okay to just enjoy being together?





YCV AS A PARISHIONER

ycv activity is a part of parish youth work. The scope of youth work varies from parish to parish. In some parishes it only consists of ycv activity or training, while others include a lot of activities aimed at adolescents such as sports, trips, services, and open doors evenings. Parish youth work is aimed more towards supporting an adolescent's growth than training them for some tasks. Within the scope of ycv activity the adolescent shouldn't primarily be considered a ycv or a club leader but a young parishioner, who needs both, right amounts of responsibility and the role of an agent, and support for their growth.

Nuoret seurakuntalaisena –development document [Adolescents as parishioners] (2012) posed a question in this regard. What if forms of peer activity inviting involvement were developed in the parish, and we could find a vision, where there is room for all kinds of adolescents to be and act in the parish? And so, that the employee doesn't try to sculpt the adolescent to fit into a particular mould? Learning occurs equally through the activity proper and involvement, and through training.

What encourages and discourages a ycv?

A central reason for starting ycv activity is that the person's ycv's from their own group encouraged and invited them. As many as nine out of ten ycv's mention this as a central reason for participation. Other important reasons in addition to others' encouragement and example were getting the opportunity to attend a camp, and finding new friends.

Even so, the most important reason is the expectation or experience that being a ycv should be fun. By 'fun' ycv's mean many things: a strong collective spirit and good atmosphere; pleasant activity, evening programs, and games; serious conversations, crushes, and all that life has to offer. All these expectations, in other words, social motivation, bring adolescents to the parish time after time during ycv activity, motivates them to spend weekends in training camps, and even participate in events that might feel boring. It also explains the great disappointment experienced by those who, after all the effort, don't get selected as ycv's in confirmation groups.

ycv training encompasses altogether 30 per cent of those confirmed each year. However, a significant portion does drop out: about a fifth drops out in small and medium-sized parishes, and as many as a third in the larger ones.

The group of approximately four thousand adolescents dropping out of ycv activity each year contains various kinds of adolescents. One group starts ycv activity out of curiosity after confirmation, but drops out after few sessions. Many parishes have a fairly long break in ycv activity during Christmas. During the break motivation might easily wane and dropping out is easy. Another common time for dropping out is after ycv's have been selected for confirmation groups. The experience of disappointment or unfair treatment might be the underlying reason in this instance.

The group dropping out of ycv training includes adolescents who have simply overbooked their time – they have too many activities in addition to their studies and days simply don't have enough hours. There are also those who do not want

to do the tasks the training is geared towards. A parish might not offer any other kind of post-confirmation youth work.

Some of the people dropping out are disappointed in the employees, the other ycv's, or the content of the activity. Some adolescents have experienced bullying during their parish activity, which becomes a reason for dropping out. There are also those, who find ycv activity either too spiritual or too lacking in spiritual content that they could get something out of.

It's normal for adolescents to start and quit the activity together and simultaneously with friends. This might be e.g. because of different employees or difficulty travelling to the parish centres.

Dropping out of ycv activity is a challenge for parish youth work. Even if there were enough people to fill the confirmation groups, dropping out is always a significant decision for an adolescent. It is a particularly meaningful decision when dropping out means that the parish connection is completely severed.

Rebuilding a severed connection is always much more difficult than fortifying an existing one. This is why special attention should be paid to the reasons for forgoing or dropping out of ycv activity. An adolescent might feel abandoned in the parish if the connection to their peers is lost and if even the employee pays them little heed. The feeling of abandonment engenders shame and reinforces the need to seclude oneself. This is why trying to keep a contact with the people quitting the activity is crucial.

Those who started ycv activity should not be left with the feeling that the parish does not need, tolerate, or desire their presence. It is the instructor's task to take special care of those who are at the edges of the community either out of choice or due to circumstances, and those who fall off. Adolescents' opportunities to participate shouldn't be limited to just ycv training or even ycv activity if it is an activity requiring commitment. Special attention needs to be paid to parish youth work as a whole offering natural places for different adolescents.



WHAT IF...

...those quitting ycv training were personally contacted and invited to continue? E.g. experienced ycv's could be authorised to put this into effect.

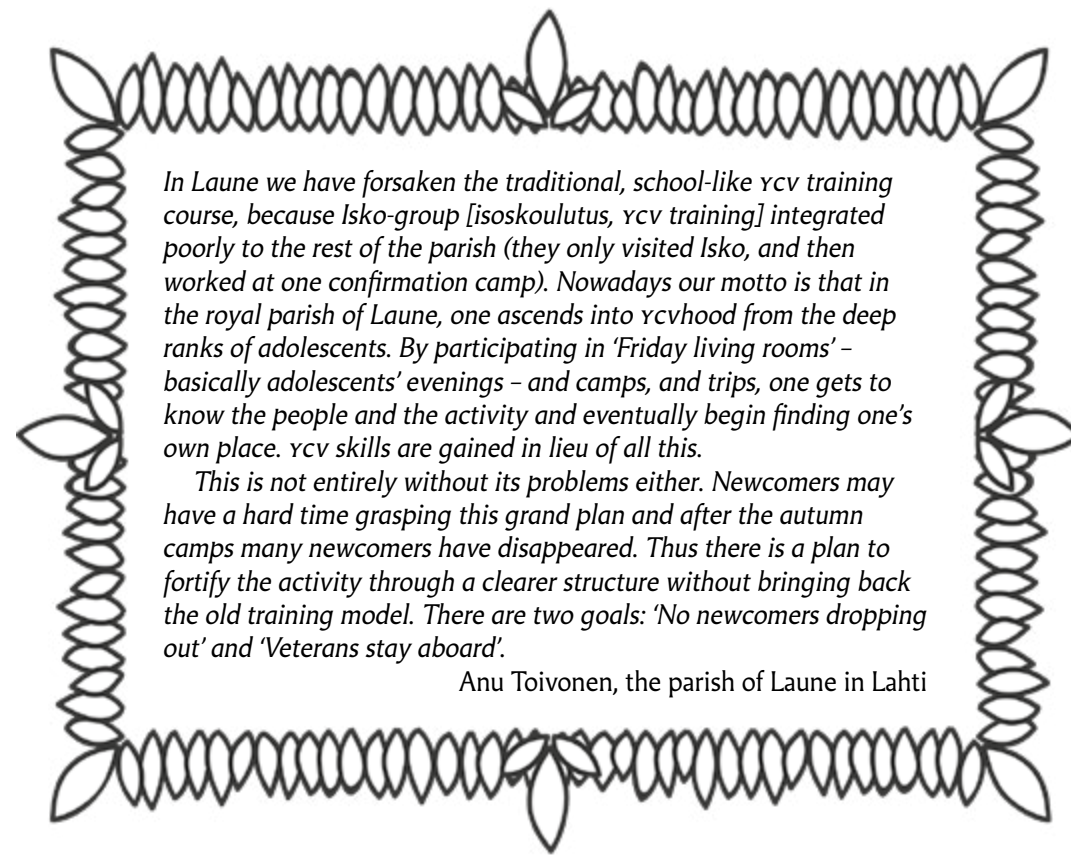
...those quitting ycv training were invited to continue again next year?

...the main focus were not on training and learning new skills, but on having a good time together and everybody enjoying themselves?

...we gave some thought to how to enable greater and lesser degrees of commitment in ycv training?

...long distance participation were also possible in ycv activity or training courses to a degree, through online channels? Could this enhance the feeling of belonging and continuity under challenging circumstances?

...there were a special season opener after the long Christmas break in ycv activity? One to which everybody were personally invited?



In Laune we have forsaken the traditional, school-like ycv training course, because Isko-group [isokoulutus, ycv training] integrated poorly to the rest of the parish (they only visited Isko, and then worked at one confirmation camp). Nowadays our motto is that in the royal parish of Laune, one ascends into ycvhood from the deep ranks of adolescents. By participating in 'Friday living rooms' – basically adolescents' evenings – and camps, and trips, one gets to know the people and the activity and eventually begin finding one's own place. ycv skills are gained in lieu of all this.

This is not entirely without its problems either. Newcomers may have a hard time grasping this grand plan and after the autumn camps many newcomers have disappeared. Thus there is a plan to fortify the activity through a clearer structure without bringing back the old training model. There are two goals: 'No newcomers dropping out' and 'Veterans stay aboard'.

Anu Toivonen, the parish of Laune in Lahti

There are many ways to belong

The popularity of ycv activity has led to a reduction in other forms of adolescents' group activity particularly in larger parishes. Some of the parishes organise practically no post-confirmation youth work aside from ycv training, while in others post-confirmation activity is more varied. The underlying reason seems to be that it's easier to motivate adolescents to participate in ycv training than in other forms of convening activity. Parish facilities are also often better suited for training than for open activity.

Some decades ago those in the young congregation may have fostered a clear separation from those not participating in parish life. Since then, many parishes have striven to lower that threshold and create the opportunity for participation for all kinds of adolescents. It is worth thinking about how parish youth work can make room for the adolescents not interested in being a ycv, or not regularly present in the activity due to e.g. their hobbies, or whose personal faith is not catered to by convening activity.

The parish can offer enjoyable time together, a place for experiencing holiness, and pleasant activity not only in confirmation work and ycv activity, but in other forms of activity as well. Adolescents in ycv activity are not always aware of these opportunities. ycv activity is enticing, because adolescents already have an idea of what the activity consists of based on their own experiences in their confirmation group and discussions with their own ycv's.

Recently it has actually become more common that YCV activity is more concretely linked to the activity of the whole parish. Thus YCV activity is a natural place to get to know not just the youth work coordinators and youth ministers, but the parish employees at large. This is useful not only with regards to the practical implementation of the confirmation time, but also the adolescents' growth towards adult parishionership.

Perhaps participation in e.g. parish club activity, scouting, family events, diaconia camps, missionary or immigration work, music work, and the preparation of services could inspire the same kind of enthusiasm as confirmation training? Perhaps many adolescents who are not interested in being YCVs in confirmation work could find a more inspiring and fitting platform for themselves in some other field of parish activity?

YCV activity is increasingly providing aptitude for voluntary work in various activities of the parish. YCVs already work in parishes, not only on confirmation camps, but also on e.g. family camps and preadolescents' camps. YCV activity might also be linked to e.g. Sunday school teacher training, club leader training, diaconia assistant training, or worship life assistant training. Courses such as Nuisku – adolescents' relationship skill course – and first aid courses EA 1 and EA 2 are organised particularly for people, who have already acted as YCVs. There may also be support person training available for these people.

One possibility for supporting the motivation of the adolescents starting YCV activity and calling them to experience stronger parish connection is indeed organising the training in a multifaceted way.

Most adolescents in YCV activity also have other hobbies and responsibilities. Over half of the YCVs are also involved with school voluntary work e.g. as tutors, a third with sports clubs, a fourth with municipal youth work or youth work NGOs. About a fourth are musically active and a fifth are scouts. It is important not to cause the adolescents to feel guilty for having other hobbies not to even mention responsibilities, nor make them feel obliged to choose between the parish and 'secular hobbies'. Broad YCV training and strict compensation procedures for absences might signal an adolescent that their other hobbies are considered rivals for their parish activity and thought to be unimportant.

It should not be a problem for the parish nor for the adolescent that the adolescent has to miss some parts of the YCV training course or interrupt their training course for some other time consuming hobby. To ensure that the parish connection is not broken there's a need for a place where an adolescent can come meet their friends and be together free of obligations. It's natural to incorporate adolescents' services in these occasions. This would enable the adolescents to grow and enjoy parish life, in both worship and sacraments, together.



WHAT IF...

- ... there were convening activity available immediately after confirmation organised by the YCVs from the camp?
- ... skills acquired in other hobbies were valued in the parish so that in YCV training previously acquired skills from e.g. scouting or training organised by some other organisation are recognised?



Longing for a communal worship life

An adolescent of age to be a ycv lives a phase where they are growing towards ever greater independence. In the middle of this period of becoming independent the adolescent might more easily be drawn to independent spiritual life. He might read the Bible, listen to music with headphones, pray, or meditate alone. According to studies ycv's are nowadays more likely to participate in the spiritual life of the parish than ycv's five or ten years ago. The growth in communal prayer has however come at the cost of private spiritual life.

It seems that adolescents need more peer contact as a part of their spiritual life. The need for connection and community seems to have grown stronger over the last ten years. Can the parish provide a sufficient response to this need by incorporating enough communal worship life and other kinds of communal spiritual activity in ycv activity?

The core identity of the congregation lies in a man's connection to God and thus in worship life. This connection is a part of the Bible, sermon, and the Holy Eucharist. It is these different kinds of worships where the parish assembles and becomes visible in this world. Participating in an assembly of a community was the life of a Christian in the early years of Christianity. In these assemblies, there was breaking of bread, prayer, song, and reminiscing of the teachings and the life of Jesus Christ. Rooting the adolescent in this core is one of the goals of ycv activity.

According to studies a majority of the ycv's have a positive view towards both, the communal worships of the parish and the private worship life associated with the ycv activity such as the services for adolescents or confirmation groups. The things the respondents enjoy in worship life are the safe atmosphere, pleasant participants, and communality. Singing hymns and new spiritual songs is also a positive experience, and sermons are considered interesting.

However, ycv's hold a critical stance towards 10-o'clock day church services. Only one in a six ycv's finds them nurturing for their faith. The brunt of the critique is aimed at the fact that the ycv's were unable to participate in planning and implementing the service.

This highlights a key point from the studies. It seems that the ycv's own active role is central for how worship life is experienced. Adolescents get excited when on camps they have the chance to plan and implement services themselves. Self-made things feel approachable and understandable. If one cannot influence worship life oneself, the experience of connection and participation suffers.

In many parishes ycv's are consecrated to their task in a service. This is a recommendable practice. It highlights the adolescents' own task and calling in the parish, it consecrates them and sends them on their commission. The whole family of the adolescent should be invited to the consecration. They could also be a part of the implementation of the worship.



WHAT IF...

- ... ycv's were invited to the design days of the worship life to share their thoughts and experiences, and to provide their own contributions for the services?
- ... ycv's were involved in building the parish worship life and events related to diaconia and commission instead of assembling them for training courses?



Together with colleagues, we've been thinking about how to include the adolescents more in the church service. It felt like it was impossible to get them to come to Church regularly on Sundays no matter what we did. We decided to take a different approach: we took the Eucharist to where the adolescents already gathered. We began developing the midweek service in close cooperation with the adolescents and we incorporated the ycv training around it. We strongly believe that if adolescents regularly partake in the Eucharist for a year or two, that in and of itself is significant and perhaps they may find the connection through Eucharist wherever in the world they travel.

Midweek services are not planned in palavers but an hour before the event the organiser group assembles at the church. Anybody is free to join the group responsible for the songs, or partake as a musician, a prayer, a reader of the verses, or a machinist. It is also possible to act as an assistant with the Eucharist after receiving the basic rundown of the procedures. Those participating in ycv training in autumn organise the midweek service together with the employees, and in the spring the same adolescents create the service together with the confirmands. Doing together continues in confirmation work, where adolescents prepare their coming celebration in confirmation workshops. In each confirmation the adolescents welcome the church crowd, compose prayers, prepare a drama for the Confession or the Sermon, sing and play, occasionally dance, rap or craft video- or art installations. For the post-confirmation adolescents beginning their ycv training, implementing services together is already familiar.

Hans Tuominen, the parish of Hakunila

When I go to the church, I don't go sit down in the bench but I go to the sacristy to ask if I could be of help.

An anonymous ycv, the Swedish parish of Åbo

To grow towards or in services of worship?

Worship education is in a state of flux. It's increasingly more common that we need to ask if worship education is meant to grow the adolescents for the worship life or if the services of worship themselves are a place for growth. There's probably a good reason to pursue both goals seriously. It's important that the adolescents have the opportunity to grow into active participant with an understanding of the service.

Recently a key goal in the development of parish worship life has been increasing active participation. In many parishes the parishioners have an increasingly active role in the service. They work in groups designing and implementing about two services each autumn and spring. This may be referred to as *kirkkoväärtöiminta* [churchwarden activity] or *jumalanpalvelusryhmä* [church service group].

In some parishes, many groups take turns bearing different responsibilities in the service. Some read the verses, others distribute the Eucharist, and some make the coffee for a post-service coffee moment. The subject of the service is the assembled congregation.

Adolescents should be encouraged to join service organising groups. Church service group membership could be recommended especially to those adolescents, who have already spent a year in YCV activity or otherwise have already been active parishioners. By participating in service organising groups the adolescent gains new acquaintances in parishioners from different generations. In the group they learn more about the ideas behind the service and simultaneously their horizons broaden as they learn to cooperate together with people from different generations. In church service groups adolescents also have the opportunity to see how all kinds of parishioners from all generations actualise the calling of a Christian and express their faith. For growing towards services of worship, an adolescent's best possible companion might be a slightly older parishioner.

It is also important for the adolescents to be allowed to be active participants in ad-

olescents' own activity, youth services and devotionals. These kinds of events allow the adolescents to learn the central theses of Christianity and through involvement they will learn to bear responsibility. In preparing devotionals and bearing responsibility an adolescent grows as a Christian. For adolescents the usual forenoon time of service is often not the most optimal but many adolescents would rather come in the evening.

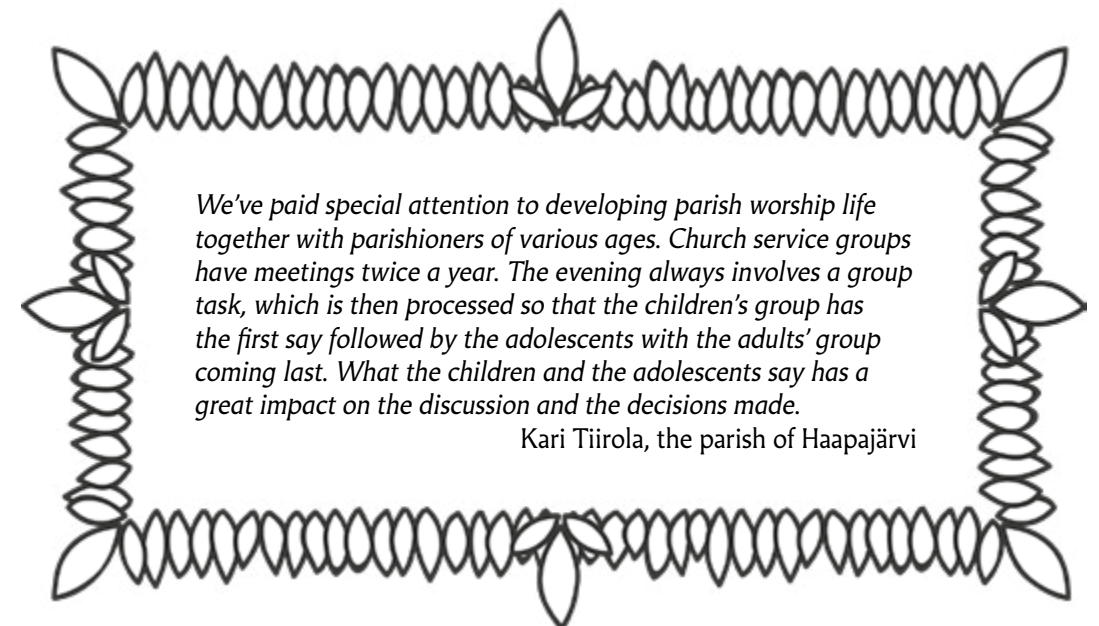
Music tends to be just as important for an adolescent in spiritual life as in everywhere else. It touches on experiencing and expressing emotions and influences an adolescent's mood. Many adolescents say they are into music in a way or another. Adolescents say they nurture their spirituality by listening to music. If parish services offer an adolescent the opportunity to make music together, this could be an important pathway to the service for them. For people of all ages, finding something resonating with one's own prayer life in the music of the service is important. Music should thus offer something to latch onto for all kinds of parishioners without compromising standards.

Deep down services are oases. Services are a place where one may come to rest, pray, and be nurtured by God. People shouldn't always have to be competent, having both the desire and the capacity to act and take responsibility. There's space for everyone in the congregation.



WHAT IF...

- ... the services were brought to the adolescents, e.g. a regular way to kick an adolescents' evening off?
- ... we assembled an adolescents' church worship group?
- ... we invited pairs of YCVs to open church service groups with participants of all ages?
- ... we made room for many kinds of music and adolescents' own performing in the services of worship?



We've paid special attention to developing parish worship life together with parishioners of various ages. Church service groups have meetings twice a year. The evening always involves a group task, which is then processed so that the children's group has the first say followed by the adolescents with the adults' group coming last. What the children and the adolescents say has a great impact on the discussion and the decisions made.

Kari Tirola, the parish of Haapajärvi



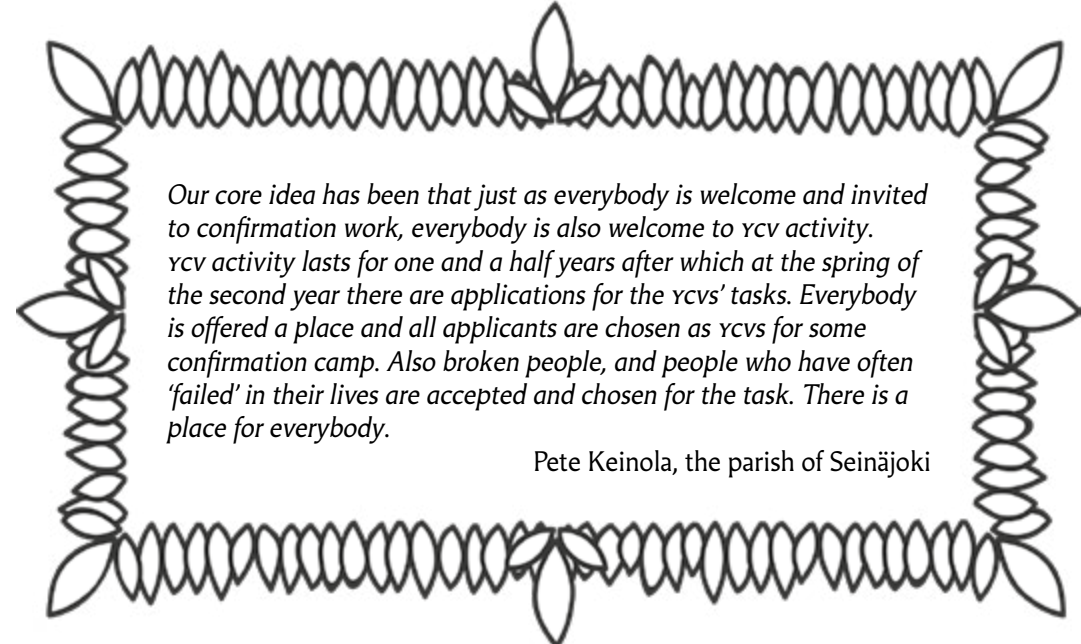
YCV ACTIVITY AND TRAINING YCVS

There's a key difference already in the semantics of the terms 'ycv activity' and 'ycv training': activity is not performing. Finnish confirmation work bears a persistent culture of performing apparent in e.g. gathering marks to a confirmation camp passport. Every now and then this is also expected of the ycv's. Adolescents nowadays experience a lot of pressure to perform different kinds of things. This is however not the point of faith or parish connection. The parish should not be adding another chip onto the adolescents' burden. There are other ways to try and safeguard equity in e.g. ycv selections. If marks are however considered necessary, the coordinators should favour a more lenient approach towards them.

One grows to be a ycv through both, participating in parish activity and training. Gradually through different tasks, an adolescent's expertise and competence grow to those of a ycv. To grow, an adolescent needs not only training but also connection with their peers and adults, alluring activity and appropriate amounts of responsibility, pausing in the face of holiness and experiencing acceptance, and room for joy and sorrow.

Practically this can e.g. involve acting with children and elders as a parishioner, varied activity and time in adolescents' groups and events, and participation in parish worship life as its implementer and experienter.

Moving from ycv training to ycv activity serves not only the adolescents but also the parish. Broader ycv activity encourages an adolescent to participate more in the parish and builds roads towards the various active institutions in the church. This development should receive further support. Simultaneously it is possible to shift the employees' role more from that of an educator to that of a spiritual guide and a coordinator.



Our core idea has been that just as everybody is welcome and invited to confirmation work, everybody is also welcome to ycv activity. ycv activity lasts for one and a half years after which at the spring of the second year there are applications for the ycv's tasks. Everybody is offered a place and all applicants are chosen as ycv's for some confirmation camp. Also broken people, and people who have often 'failed' in their lives are accepted and chosen for the task. There is a place for everybody.

Pete Keinola, the parish of Seinäjoki

The planning of YCV training is increasingly done by teams rather than individual employees. However, it is still common for one employee to be responsible for the training in small parishes. The broadening of YCVs' tasks has presented the training with challenges and requirements making the whole something that increasingly concerns the whole parish. YCV activity is slowly turning from precision training for group leader tasks in confirmation work to a broader assistant training that serves the entire parish.

The structure and scope of YCV training

YCV activity is multifaceted and often flexible and full of variety. Training needs more structure than other types of YCV activity. Practically speaking there are four clear distinct categories for the implementation of YCV training, though they're almost always employed in a combination of some kind. For example group trips and camps are a part of the YCV training course in almost all the parishes even when the rest of the education is structured around school-like solutions.

EVENING SCHOOL MODEL

The YCV training group convenes regularly, the most common frequency being once a week, and various themes related to training are covered from as many angles as possible. The meetings always include prayer life. This is clearly the most common way of implementing a YCV training course; over half of the parishes use this. The strengths of this model are its regularity and the fact that all the basic things of being a YCV are at least theoretically covered. The challenges include it easily turning YCV training into its own separate entity with little or no connection to parish life, not even to parish youth work.

MODULE MODEL

The YCV training course is composed of meetings involving the whole group. They include prayer life in addition to other activity and being together. Additionally there are plenty of optional events and projects available involving e.g. implementing services, diaconia, or preteen youth work. This model is used by about a fifth of the parishes. Its strengths are customisability based on the adolescent's individual needs and interests. Its challenges are the lack of a unitary group and the lack of a clear structure for the training.

INTENSIVE COURSE MODEL

The YCV training course is implemented through a number of e.g. weekend long meetings of camps. Personal home study tasks may be used to augment the model. The model is well-suited for especially small parishes and organisations. About a fifth of the parishes follow this model. Its weakness is the low frequency of social events. Parishes are thus well-advised to combine the model with other sorts of youth activity, or incorporate social media to connect the group between the intensive periods.

ADOLESCENTS' EVENING MODEL

YCV training is an essential part of the normal parish youth activity and there's no separate YCV training course whatsoever in the parish. Amidst the adolescents' evenings there are groups for adolescents of different ages dealing with the things meaningful to them. The lines between YCV training and youth activity are intentionally vague. Prayer life is a key part of this model.

The model solves many of the problems caused by YCV training being an isolated course. An adolescent, who quits YCV training, can still maintain the connection with the parish. The model does however require plentiful human resources and facilities. Employees must also share an understanding of what can be expected of YCVs after this kind of training.

The scope of YCV training varies a lot. Based on the information provided by the parishes the shortest training course is only two hours long while the longest is altogether 150 hours. On average, the YCV training course is about 50 hours.

In a third of the parishes adolescents are required to participate in a training course lasting at least one year after their confirmation before they can act as YCVs in confirmation work. However, in most of the parishes the length of the training is from half a year to one year. In the smallest parishes the training might only take one or two weekends though a course this long is growing even rarer.

Usually the broader training courses are organised in the larger parishes while the smaller ones tend towards the narrower end. This is at least partly due to the number of employees and the number of participants. In large parishes there may be hundreds of adolescents joining the YCV activity while there may be just few individuals in the smaller ones.

In most of the parishes the length of YCV training is approximately the same as that of the confirmation course, approximately 80 hours. Thus the parish offers the adolescents two consecutive 'packages' quite like educational courses. These draw especially those adolescents for whom goal-oriented studying is natural. On the other hand for a part of the group, particularly for the poorly motivated, training courses this broad and heavy might be too demanding.

For experienced YCVs there's an advanced YCV training course available in over a half of the parishes. The course is usually implemented separately, or partly or completely in conjunction with the first year training course. It is fairly common for the more experienced YCVs to be involved in the greener YCVs' training either as group leaders or as teachers.

There are situations where school-like interaction with the YCVs is desirable. In these cases it's important that the time spent with the YCVs is not just teacher-centric activity like lecturing. Studies associated with learning prove that lecturing, reading, and audio-visual teaching methods are associated with the worst learning outcome. Instead group work and participatory methods lead to far broader learning. The most efficient is that YCVs themselves are allowed to plan and implement their learning. For this reason it is important that YCV activity involves participation in various kinds of parish activity, and that school-like studying be a relatively small component of the whole.



WHAT IF...

- ... we discussed together about the skills a ycv should have before acting as a ycv in confirmation work or another ycv position, and which skills are best acquired in practice? Simultaneously we can ponder the appropriate scope of a ycv training course.
- ... together with adolescents, we gave some thought to what kind of ycv training model or structure would best serve their needs?
- ... we asked the ycv training participants about the ways in which they'd like to learn a ycv's skills?
- ... we listened carefully to those, who already finished their training and acted as ycv's? Which things did the training prepare them for and what was missing? How should ycv training be developed?

Parish youth sports activity is open to everybody. Its motto is 'Let a pal shine'. This is associated with the idea of sports as a part of life that everybody can join in as themselves on their level with their skills together with the others. The main content of the activity is floorball and football. In addition to these sports evenings there are different tournaments. Tournaments have adolescents not only as players but coaches, support personnel, cheerleaders, and as simple spectators. On the tournament trips it's important that everybody is equally important. There's no emphasis for the players but everybody is a part of the group. Since its inception, the ideas of volunteerism and 'employing' the adolescents to keep the activity going have had a strong presence in the activity. This has been an important enabler for letting the adolescents feel themselves as the subjects of the activity, not just the objects.

Antti Nieminen, the parish of Malmi

What skills does a ycv need?

According to the employees, the central tasks of a ycv in confirmation work and other camps are the planning and implementation of the evening programs, coordinating the free time activities, the menial tasks of the confirmation work, group work, teamwork, performance and supervision. For these tasks, most of the training courses are able to provide reasonable tools according to the employees. There are far fewer tools provided by the training course for pastoral care, service implementation, being a teaching aide, overseeing silence, singing, and playing an instrument.

However, the participant experiences ycv training as something far more comprehensive than learning skills for the mentioned tasks of a ycv. Things learnt and digested in ycv training have to do with e.g. the ability to have meaningful and pleasant interaction with others, and living as a Christian in this world.

The goal of ycv training is to reinforce an adolescent's competence and expertise so that they have adequate tools to enjoy being a ycv. Successful ycv training requires neither vast theoretical databanks nor traditional teacher-centric education. Adolescents learn from the more experienced group members in inter-ycv interaction. Simultaneously the less experienced group members can provide new information and experience for the whole group.

Based on the ycv's self-assessments collected through a survey, ycv activity has taught them social skills, responsibility, self-confidence, tolerance, reliability, problem solving skills, creativity, and the ability to cope with uncertainty.

Many ycv's believe that they have also learnt critical thinking and processing matters related to faith.

Accounting for this information we can begin to build the content of ycv training e.g. by asking:

- What skills are needed for leading a group?
- How can we support the formation of a safe group?
- How do we account for lonely group members, or those who end up in the margins?
- What more should we learn so that the confirmation work succeeded as well as possible?
- How do we support the growth of the ycv's own faith? How does the ycv support the growth of the confirmand's faith?

It's also important to ask the adolescents for their own wishes and strengths while designing the training course. Thus we could ask:

- Which things, that are beneficial for a ycv, would you like to learn?
- What are your particular strong points and in which skills would you like to develop yourself, when you think about yourself as a ycv?
- How can you yourself influence your goals being realised?

In the actual ycv training it is possible to focus on the basic abilities and information needed to be a ycv while the broader ycv activity aims to support the adolescent and their personal growth. The training course can be thought of as a sufficient

beginner's package to get started with further learning taking place in confirmation work and other parish activities.

The content and methods of confirmation work form a good basis for selecting the content of ycv training. Any special needs related to implementing confirmation camps and other activity must be accounted for in local parishes during the planning of the training course. Everybody involved in parish confirmation work should also agree among themselves what is expected of the ycv's, so that the contents of the training course correspond to the tasks a ycv is given in confirmation work.

If ycv's are to coordinate conversation- and bible groups during confirmation work, they need to be given the tools for this during the training course. If they're expected to be teaching aides, they'll need pedagogical guidance to fall back on. For handling evening programmes and free-time activity the ycv's need those particular skillsets. Media ycv's need reinforcement for their own skills, particularly so that social media can be utilised for community-building and learning purposes in confirmation work.

When the topics related to gender and sexuality are covered during the confirmation time, it is wise to also cover these topics during ycv training. If we're talking about a green confirmation group, the theme of being ecological should also be present in ycv training. Because the Bible is used a lot during confirmation work, it is natural that the ycv's' understanding of the Bible should be reinforced during the ycv training course. Interaction- and relationship skills are useful in all kinds of ycv activity so they should be emphasised.

The training escorts the ycv to being a ycv in confirmation work and to other tasks, but it also supports the adolescent's growth towards being an adult parishioner. It is rare to be provided tools for treating matters of faith and spiritual growth outside the parish. There are many other hobbies and voluntary activities that provide tools for many of the ycv's' tasks, but faith and connection to the Holy Trinity is the central domain of the parish and ycv activity.

It is important for the employees to discuss, what is the task or calling given by the parish to the ycv. What precisely is the ycv's task in the parish, and what should it be? If these things are not considered, the expectations and messages of the different employees can be conflicting.



WHAT IF...

- ... the participants' wishes and expectations were heeded for ycv training, and the contents were designed together with the participants?
- ... every parish member involved in confirmation work gathered together to think about their expectations for the ycv's and through that, for ycv activity and the training course?
- ... we together thought about the task the parish should give to a ycv? What do we want to convey in words and between the lines?

In our place the main goal of ycv activity lies in the 'by doing'-idea. The goal is that the ycv trainees learn the skills needed for confirmation camps, and preteen- and family camps by doing. Learning through doing takes places in lieu of the adolescents' weekly activity. The adolescents practice, implement and coordinate various activities. These include e.g. Bible groups, the programme and the devotionals in adolescents' evenings, and participating in the implementation of the sermons, intercessions, confessions, etc. in adolescents' services. A separate 'training session' is implemented as fri-sun ycv training camps of which there three in a year.

Mimosa Mäkinen, Sonja Holkerinoja, and Tiro Rohkimainen,
the parish of Kauniainen



Cooperation in organising training

The ycv training in small parishes is usually implemented in cooperation with neighbouring parishes or Christian NGOs. In larger parishes this kind of cooperation is rarer since the parish has a lot of personnel organising ycv activity already.

There can be cooperation in ycv training between the different branches of the parish. Combining club leader training and ycv training are already regularly combined in many parishes. In some parishes the content and resources of the Scout group leader training, ROK [an acronym of its Finnish term *Ryhmän OhjaajaKoulutus*], are also pooled with those of ycv training e.g. so that most of the core modules are the same for all three programs and all the participants can choose, which specialisation modules to take.

ROK is a part of the 15–17-year old rangers' program and its contents are fixed nationally by the national scouting program. Combining the training courses especially caters to those active adolescents, whose weekly program includes coordinating a club- or a scout group. According to the study, 21 per cent of the ycv's have also volunteered in the scouts and 43 per cent in some other parish activity.

ROK is organised by voluntary scout leaders, who are often active young adults. In some parishes combining the training course has also lead to highly skilled, voluntary ROK-trainers being responsible for some of the content of the combined training. Thus parish employees are freed up for other important forms of parish activity.

The opportunities for cooperation should be considered more broadly both, within the parish organisation and with other organisations. What kinds of possibilities would a broader cooperation with diaconia work open up for ycv training or the adolescents, for instance? What about cooperation with family work? Or with the support staff of the church?



WHAT IF...

- ... added value and familiarity were gained by involving the deacons, the cantors, the employees of the scouts, or those working in children's work or preteen youth work in ycv activity in some way?
- ... we thought about the options that could be provided by implementing ycv activity in cooperation with the parish union, or other parishes or organisations of the deanery?

In the Keisko-model [Finnish acronym from 'kerhonohjaaja- ja isoskoulutus'] ycv training and club leader training courses are combined. The training course covers working with both, preteens and adolescents. The goal is to provide the ycv's with the tools to take responsibility not only in confirmation work but in other parish activities such as children's camps.

Rather than being a performance-focused education module, the training course is designed to support the adolescents' holistic growth. The employees are there for the participating adolescents to support them in their learning and growing process. On the other hand older ycv's act as role models and guides.

Post-ycv training, when the adolescent seeks out different ycv positions in confirmation work, preteen youth work, or children's camps, he acts as a young companion for the camp participants. Internalising this companionship helps integrate ycv training more closely with other forms of youth work and parish activity.

When the adolescent is offered the skills needed to act as a ycv for preteens, simultaneously they are offered the chance to experience success, respect, acceptance, and aptitude in front of the preteens and the employees. These kinds of positive experiences reinforce the adolescent's confidence, and their feeling of self-worth, and encourage the adolescent.

Kati Marjakangas

In some of the parishes of Tampere the term 'ycv training' has been supplanted by the term 'group leader training', because there has been a desire to expand the concept of ycvhood to more clearly cover other activities than just confirmation work. The adolescents, who have finished the group leader training, can also act as club leaders and as ycv's at i.a. family camps and schoolchildren's camps. Practically this means more emphasis on clubs and schoolchildren in group leader training. For the employees this means that the group leader training is not solely the domain of post-confirmation youth work but the entire field of youth work is involved in group leader training.

Jari Pulkkinen, the parish union of Tampere



YCV IN CONFIRMATION WORK

When does an adolescent enter the sphere of confirmation work? Is it already when the adolescent with their family thinks about participation and finding the right group? What about confirmation work from the perspective of a participating YCV?

If the essential part of the half a year in confirmation work is ultimately what happens in the adolescent's heart and mind, confirmation work isn't ultimately made up of just meetings where a group of adolescents lead by adults are gathered together in church facilities. Confirmation work as the adolescents' internal process also occurs between these gatherings.

This is not just about studying the informational contents of confirmation work. The adolescent experiences mental images, expectations, prejudices, and first and foremost, thoughts about what it is like to live as a Christian in this world. The confirmation work coordinators may encounter confirmands e.g. at the school, community centre, or even fuelling station. Confirmation training always includes a lot beyond what the employees convey, after all.

The YCVs who have been involved since the beginning of the confirmation group are the feelers of the group as compared to the employees, they tend to be much closer to the confirmands. Confirmands read the YCVs' life and actions like an open book, which tells about Christian adolescents. How is a YCV a YCV to the confirmands when not in the formal role? How could the coordinator support the YCV to be a YCV in all circumstances? On the other hand: can it be required or is it even desirable for a YCV to always be a YCV?

Practically speaking, the YCV's time in the confirmation group often begins long before the group's first meeting. YCVs are involved in planning the confirmation



time regularly in about a fourth of the parishes. This practice seems to be gaining ground, since only in a fourth of the parishes do the YCVs never participate in the planning phase. Involving the YCVs bears fruit since it reinforces their involvement and engages them with the activity. A human feels invested in things they themselves have had the opportunity to influence.

Different practices in YCVs' participation in the planning period and the early parts of the confirmation time are at least partly explained by when the YCVs are selected. That in turn is connected to the duration of the YCV training course.

In the parishes with a semester-long YCV training course, the training is usually still unfinished by the time the confirmation groups launch. If the course is half a year or one-and-a-half-years, the training period ends approximately when the confirmation groups launch. This enables including the YCVs already in the planning phase.



WHAT IF...

- ... the goals of confirmation work were set together with the coordinators and the YCVs?
- ... special attention in the planning of confirmation work were paid to where and how confirmands can be engaged outside parish events? Which options are available for adults and which for YCVs?
- ... YCVs explained, what they expect out of the employees?
- ... YCVs participated in the planning of the confirmation time and the implementation of worship life regardless of when the YCVs are finally selected?

How to take good care of YCVs?

YCVs are a colourful bunch. They must be noticed both as a group and as individuals. It is of tremendous importance to the YCVs that they feel the adults are on their side, rather than feeling like the employees' 'attendants' or 'handimen'. Everybody participates in the confirmation time to learn including the adults.

A YCV has the right to know their rights and responsibilities while acting as a YCV. It is a good practice to make a separate contract with the YCVs documenting the goal of the activity and the rights and the responsibilities of the YCV.

Early investment in esprit de corps among the YCVs and the employees, mutual trust and common goals, is a cornerstone of successful confirmation time. Usually adults are already familiar to the YCVs from their own confirmation time and to the YCVs, they are examples of what it is to be an adult Christian and a church employee. The employee should act with awareness of their position. The employee's words, expressions and gestures are very meaningful to the adolescents particularly when it is about personal feedback to the adolescent. Criticism or being poked fun at however lightly might be very hurtful to the adolescent. Listening, support, and encouragement can for their part have a major, even a decisive impact on the adolescent's life.

Particularly for the first time YCVs, the most important YCV training event is the confirmation time itself and being a YCV there. Therefore it is desirable for the employees to invest in support and guidance especially during the confirmation time and particularly the camp period.

To take care of YCVs is to say that care should be taken of simple things: sufficient rest and sleep, appropriate doses of tasks and responsibilities, a lot of support and encouragement. YCV's work in camp tends to be constant hustle and bustle, and the YCVs are often so motivated that they take on too much responsibility overburdening themselves. Thus camp life should include moments when the YCVs have no tasks to perform.

It is good to discuss with the YCVs about the fact that already getting to know other adolescents and 'mere' participation in and of itself being valuable. It feels good to the YCVs that they are needed and given responsibility, but often it is enough that the YCV can spend time building their interaction with the other adolescents and to find their way to be a member of the community.

YCV-employee discussions are important moments for unburdening and recharging oneself. They involve going through the day's events, the YCVs' feelings, how things are working out, and the cooperation within the YCV team.

YCVs form a peer group, where mutual trust and cooperation are astonishingly important. For timid, fumbling YCVs, peer support is an exceptional source of strength. There are good experiences of YCVs working in pairs from many parishes. This arrangement enables taking a larger number of YCVs along while simultaneously providing immediate support for the fumbling ones. Pair work also lowers the threshold of YCVs of different aptitudes to participate. It is also a good practice to name an assistant coordinator or a 'chief YCV' with the particular task of supporting and listening to the other YCVs.

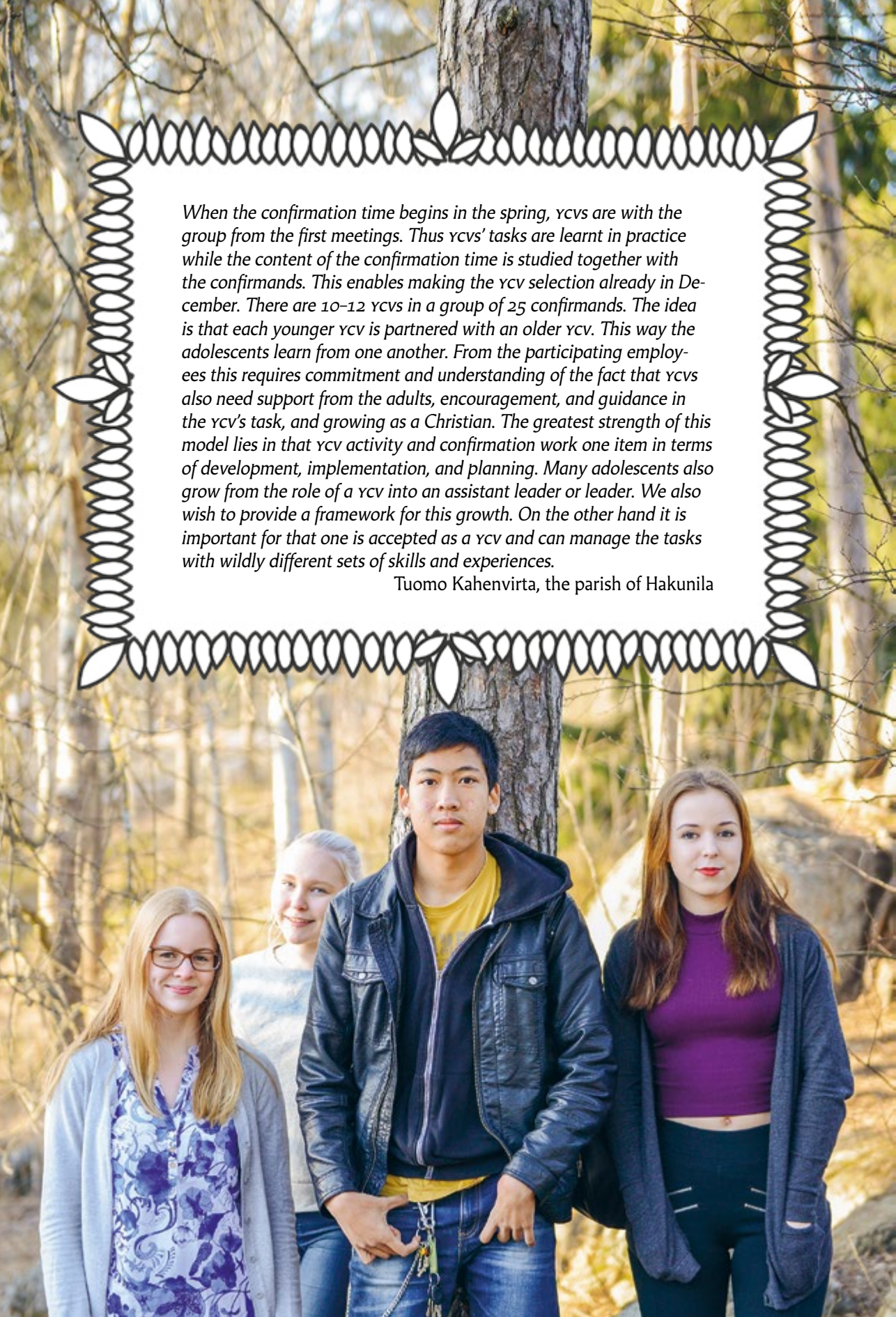
Good care is a part of the personal guidance of the YCVs. In many parishes there are personal discussions with the YCVs before, during, and after the responsibilities of the confirmation time. YCVs deserve the kind of support provided by a tone-setting discussion where both sides are equally free to express their wishes and provide honest feedback.

It is good for the adolescent to ponder about what are their goals and desires in being a YCV, and discuss the actualisation of these goals with the coordinators. YCV has the right to get good experiences out of YCV activity. Feedback and evaluation are important mirrors for the YCV's personal growth.



WHAT IF...

- ... the YCVs acted in pairs?
- ... YCVs had a resting period marked in the program, and the permission to not be usable?
- ... so-called 'chief YCV' or assistant coordinator had the particular task of taking care of the YCVs' well-being and listening to them?
- ... every YCV had the opportunity to have a personal discussion with a coordinator about how they experienced being a YCV?



When the confirmation time begins in the spring, ycv's are with the group from the first meetings. Thus ycv's tasks are learnt in practice while the content of the confirmation time is studied together with the confirmands. This enables making the ycv selection already in December. There are 10–12 ycv's in a group of 25 confirmands. The idea is that each younger ycv is partnered with an older ycv. This way the adolescents learn from one another. From the participating employees this requires commitment and understanding of the fact that ycv's also need support from the adults, encouragement, and guidance in the ycv's task, and growing as a Christian. The greatest strength of this model lies in that ycv activity and confirmation work one item in terms of development, implementation, and planning. Many adolescents also grow from the role of a ycv into an assistant leader or leader. We also wish to provide a framework for this growth. On the other hand it is important for that one is accepted as a ycv and can manage the tasks with wildly different sets of skills and experiences.

Tuomo Kahenvirta, the parish of Hakunila

Together in the face of holiness...

Spiritual life comes in as many shapes and forms as life in general. Devotional life is allowed to have many aspects, e.g. physical, emotional, aesthetic, creative, operational, and social ones. Less and less ycv's have learnt to pray or otherwise live their faith at home, so a natural environment featuring repetition, simplicity, and serenity is needed in confirmation work and ycv activity.

In Finnish confirmation work, spirituality and discussion about God are almost solely restricted to the situations reserved for them, that is to say devotionals and services of worship. The presence of God does not depend on our words and one should not lapse into campiness, but we should persistently seek real and natural ways to talk about God with the adolescents and remain in the face of holiness together. This is usually easier with the ycv's than with the confirmands. The way in which an employee discusses about God with the ycv's also encourages the ycv's to discuss about God with the confirmands.

Covering spirituality is a central part of guiding a ycv. ycv's are often uncertain as e.g. leaders of devotionals and need support there. ycv's should not be left alone to implement a devotional to avoid the ycv forming a subconscious association between the task and the need to perform tinted with fear or anxiety. These tasks should be planned and undertaken together, though the heavier responsibilities should rotate by everyone. A ycv's first devotional should be in a familiar group smaller than the entire confirmation group.

Many ycv's experience that one gets much deeper into the spiritual world as a ycv than as a confirmand. Often ycv activity is the decisive push towards a personal prayer life, reading the Bible and regularly partaking of the Eucharist.

Out of the confirmation time and ycv training the adolescent expects something they cannot find elsewhere. If the growing adolescent has often been to the Eucharist, they might understand that the church on a fundamental level is about more than what kinds of personal returns are currently offered for the church tax. The adolescents' family should also be invited to the services of worship and connected to the prayers. It is the natural task of the congregation.



WHAT IF...

- ... we invested in partaking of the Eucharist regularly together in ycv activity?
- ... we ensured that the ycv's get sufficient support in the preparation of the devotionals?
- ... we sent yearly letters to the ycv's' families, where we told a bit about the year in ycv activity, prayed for their adolescent, and wished God's blessing upon the whole family?

...also in evening programs and free time

Over the decades traditions have developed in confirmation camps, where evening programmes are of particular importance. There are particular expectations set

for the programmes: they are to be fun and casual. It is seen as the climax of the day and the last evening programme of the camp as the apex of the entire camp, and even the whole confirmation time. It is normal for certain sketches, plays and competitions to be repeated camp after camp, year after year without anybody questioning their purpose or desirability.

In most parishes evening programmes are a central theme in YCV training. YCVs expect a lot out of the evening programmes and measure their success by the applause they get. How could we support the evening programme also being a part of the overall goals of the confirmation time leading everyone towards the face of holiness?

Consciously or unconsciously the evening programme may morph into the counterbalance of the daily teaching, occasionally even to the point of voiding it. So that the evening programme be not dissociated from the goals and purpose of the confirmation time and so that everybody's safety be ensured, adult employees' participation in the planning of the evening programmes is necessary.

It is possible to construct themed wholes out of the evening programmes, which are both, fun and in line with the goals of the confirmation time. The confirmands themselves could also be inquired about their wishes regarding the evening programmes, and they could be encouraged to implement their ideas. A part of the themes is to pay attention to the selection of the songs. Both the adolescents' wishes and the theme should be considered.

'The most important of the YCVs' working hours are the confirmands' free time.' Thus says an old adage often taught to the YCVs. What could the perspective of holiness, safe parish, involvement, and activity in line with the goals of confirmation work mean in the context of free time? Viewing humans holistically, it is important to remember that not all adolescents are active and not all adolescents enjoy competitions or being in the limelight. Not everybody shares a sense of humour, and not everybody enjoys situations with a lot of people in cramped quarters. Being forced into situations not suited for one's temperament and personality might make people anxious and stressed. Occasionally only an older YCV or an employee talking with an adolescent and showing open interest in them may be a novel, unique experience.

A holy moment is one where the adolescent feels respected and taken seriously.

Should the YCVs receive monetary reward?

In most of the parishes YCVs are still paid for working as a YCV. There are large differences in the practices between the various parishes and dioceses: in 2011, YCVs were paid on average 12,80 euros per day. The amount has been in decline for years. A part of the parishes pay YCVs per confirmation group they've volunteered in rather than per day. In the year 2011, the average reward was 84 euros.

The decision of whether to provide a monetary reward to YCVs is not always economical but it's often also a matter of principle. Large, economically stable parishes might not pay YCVs while small parishes often pay in spite of the poor economic situation. In the countryside the reward often plays the part of recompense, since

participating in YCV activity and training is costly due to the long distances.

Abstaining from rewards has been a general practice in the parishes of Helsinki and in general, the large urban parishes, but it seems to be growing increasingly common elsewhere as well. The big picture is blurry however, since in small parishes and in the countryside the trend seems to be the opposite of that in the urban parishes. Some sort of recognition should always be given to the YCVs for their important contribution. For example a songbook, YCV shirts, a free 'thank you' camp, or a trip to some event are among some more special ways to acknowledge the YCVs that may feel more remarkable than cash.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CHURCH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT DELEGATION ABOUT THE YCV'S DUTY

According to the Church collective bargaining agreement delegation (kirkon sopimusvaltuuskunta) YCV training is education in Christian faith and actualizing the faith in practice. YCVs are not employed by the parish and thus their acting as YCVs should not be referred to as a job. It is voluntary activity, which is recompensed for in a part of the parishes.

If the YCVs' activity on confirmation camps matches the traditional duties of a YCV and if there is a reasonable reward for undertaking the task, the YCV is not considered to be employed by the parish and no employment contract is thus made. There's also no pension payment paid of the reward. Because YCV are not employed by the parish, they should be separately insured for e.g. accidents.

The situation is different when the parish hires more mature adolescents for the confirmation camp to e.g. oversee camp safety in the evening- and night time, or undertake teaching responsibilities. People in these kinds of posts should generally be considered employees. This fact is not affected by them being referred to as 'isonen' [YCV].



FROM A YCV TO AN ADULT

In successful YCV activity the adolescents participate, influence, and bear responsibility in their own positions in a way, which could also invite adults to grow and live in connection with a parish.

Young congregation is a safe, familiar spiritual community for most participants of YCV activity, one where they feel always welcome and one where they feel they belong. The greatest challenge is thus to find or create the structures that enable similar experiences in the future as well. Adult parish should of course also be a safe, familiar spiritual community where people feel welcome and where people experience belonging.

So how to pave the YCV's way from confirmation work and youth activity towards a more adult parish connection?

The role of the post-ycvhood adolescents

The mean age of the YCVs is currently about 16.4 years. YCVs' career is often short: a half of the YCVs are first-timers and approximately one in six are YCVs for a second or a third time. Only six per cent have been YCVs for at least four times. However, there is an ever growing number of people over 18 in confirmation work, because many continue in confirmation work after their YCV career under various titles such as assistant coordinator, lead YCV, chief YCV, or night watch-person.

According to the latest statistics, there are adult YCVs or former YCVs in a third of the confirmation groups. A part of them participate in the whole confirmation time starting from the first gathering to the last. In 2011 there were over 2500 adolescents over the age of 18 in YCV activity of whom a bit over 300 were over 20 years of age. The same year, adults' group activity in parishes reached 3800 persons. YCV activity is thus increasingly also becoming young adult activity.

It is worth thinking about what kind of activity is planned and implemented together with the post-ycvhood young adults. A proven model includes giving the experienced YCVs significant responsibilities in the planning phase, and in guiding and coaching the younger YCVs in post-confirmation time YCV activity. Experienced YCVs can act as leaders for the YCV activity participants also in implementing services of worship and parish events. Offering responsibility to the experienced YCVs reinforces the communality of YCV activity and brings it to the core of the parish life. Simultaneously YCV activity keeps offering challenges to those, who have been involved for many years.

Almost sixty per cent of the YCVs would like to continue in the parish also post-ycvhood. Long-time YCVs have accrued a lot of experience and understanding of voluntary activity. The opportunities provided by this vast resource might fly under the radar in the church however, even though these post-ycvhood young adults could act as volunteers in different functions of the parish and some also as future church employees. Every other kind of participation as a parishioner is also a valuable resource for the church. Post-ycv activity however, the church does not however seem to express a need for the YCVs anymore and thus a majority of them does not find their place in the parish. This is an enormous loss.

ycv is a volunteer

Voluntary activity is self-motivated, gratuitous, activity of general interest, which tends to be organised by e.g. a parish, a sports club, or an NGO. There has been an increase in the voluntary participation of the young age cohorts over the last ten years. According to a study from 2012, more than one in three of the 15–29-year olds are volunteering in a way or another.

An acting volunteer is a representative of the organisation behind the activity and thus authorised to perform the given task. A volunteer can be anybody recognised by the organiser, be they a teen or a senior citizen. Within this paradigm ycv's are parish volunteers and they act as representatives of the parish just as much as the adults partaking in parish voluntary work. Some ycv's have begun their voluntary activity even before their ycvhood as *appari* [a diminutive form of *assistant*] or *pikkuisonen* ['little ycv'].

Even though ycv's are parish volunteers, they are not always thought of as such, at least not in the same sense as e.g. the person on the call in *Palvelevä Puhelin* ['General Helpline'], the neighbours from *ystäväpalvelu* ['Be-a-Friend Service'], or service assistants. The reason may lie in the forms of work and tradition, but also in a narrow understanding of volunteering.

Voluntary activity takes many forms. One way to make a taxonomy of these many forms is to categorise them based on the nature of the activity. This kind of taxonomy might also help with understanding ycv activity. Voluntary activity can be:

ACTING TOGETHER (horizontal). Examples include peer groups, where people facing a similar situation in life come together to support one another. ycv's and confirmands can also often be together in a way that consists of equal giving and receiving.

HELPING (vertical), where the helper does something for another without being in a similar circumstance. ycv activity involves a lot of helping and supporting the younger, less experienced people particularly with things the ycv themselves has already experienced during their own confirmation time and confirmation.

DIACONAL SUPPORT, where mental, spiritual, economic, or social support is given to those in need. ycv can also provide pastoral care in a restricted sense, praying for the younger person, listening to their worries, providing them with new perspectives to life and aiding them in creating new social connections.

A SERIOUS FREE TIME HOBBY, which refers to e.g. acting in an educational position such as that of a teacher, a coordinator, a coach, or a tutor. ycv activity is responsible, long-term activity requiring a lot of time, which an adolescent might think of as a hobby. Adolescents often name it as their hobbies alongside sports and music.

Volunteering can be any kind of assistance, but it also has a broader dimension touching the whole society and the church. Voluntary activity unites the church and the society. According to the church voluntary activity guidelines *Jokainen on osallinen* (2015) ['Everybody is involved']: The task of church voluntary activity is to invite people to partake in a community of love and responsibility, and to offer everybody an opportunity to gift their time and skills for shared good.

This is one possible way to build bridge from ycvhood to the adult parish: already during their time as ycv's, adolescents could form an identity as parish volunteers. Through this they might continue as active contributors of the parish after they outgrow the ycv phase. Volunteering should be contemplated with broad perspectives, and developed to match the specific local needs.



WHAT IF...

- ... those responsible for the parish voluntary activity were present in ycv activity, and invited experienced ycv's to partake in other appealing forms of volunteering in the parish?
- ... the parish sent ycv's and other youth work volunteers the same information and invitations to common gathering as to adult parish volunteers?
- ... adult parish volunteers were invited to participate in ycv activity in appealing positions?
- ... supporting adolescents' belonging and activity in the parish were developed together with adult volunteers or experienced ycv's? Working with the adolescents should not necessarily be left solely to the employees.
- ... the parish succeeded in developing more positions in ycv activity for adult volunteers? Would this also increase the participation opportunities of the adolescents, who need special support?



Of the adolescents who don't yet participate in voluntary activity, a great number would like to participate if they were asked join in the activity. The adolescents themselves are more likely than the other age cohorts to report that they are not participating because nobody asked them to. More than one in five announces that this is the most important reason for not participating. This phenomenon seems to be particularly accentuated in people at the risk of marginalisation. These people simply do not seem to know how to, or dare to seek out the activity by themselves, but they need adults to support and encourage them to join in. The central operators in this case are schools and the parish, which reaches a great majority of the adolescents through confirmation work. Making the opportunities of voluntary activity known as a part of the teaching during the confirmation time, and creating paths between activities for the post-confirmation time is important especially from the perspective of the adolescents' involvement. Furthermore it offers a pleasant way to maintain parish connection even when religious authorities or doctrines are questioned and pondered, like is wont to happen in the adolescence.

Henrietta Grönlund

What does membership mean to the ycv?

ycvs are adolescents with a strong commitment to parish membership. According to the studies, almost every ycv wants to bring their young child to be baptised, if they are to have children. Almost equally common is a positive attitude towards Christianity and a view of the church as an organisation working for the good of people.

It is however slightly surprising that only slightly over a half of the ycv's consider church membership important to themselves. Two in three have a positive attitude towards the church and a third believes that they would turn to a church employee if they encountered trouble.

These results reflect the partial lack of structure in the ycv's' thinking, and being in a state of flux. ycv's seem to dissociate between the church and the parish in their minds. One's own parish feels familiar and close, but the church feels distant and archaic, an institution that is quite arduous to approach. A similar separation between the parish and the church is apparent already in the adolescents beginning their confirmation time: only a fifth have a positive idea of the church.

The parish has a good ring to it in the ears of the ycv's – it is an intimate, cosy, caring place they can call their own. Social contacts and a community made up of friends are very important reasons for the adolescents to participate in parish

activity. On a conceptual level the parish and the church may still be mixed. The same ycv, who criticises the church calling it archaic and prejudiced, might still have positive things to say about church membership.

Adolescents and young adults often see the church as a value community, which should advance things they believe are right such as tolerance, equal treatment of people, and diaconia. If the church is seen as a conservative authority, it can decisively decrease the threshold to leave the church even if the parish had played a significant role in the adolescent's life. Leaving the church can also take place between youth work and the other forms of parish activity. Then youth work is referred to with the term 'parish', but services of worship as church activity.

Participating in parish activity usually means getting new friends and getting to know long-time friends in a new, deeper way. A part of the essence of the parish is an 'inexplicable atmosphere', which draws adolescents. Employees are also important. Some of the ycv's still keep in touch with them after their years as a ycv.

ycvs seem to keep desiring pleasant coexistence with other people, the opportunity to spend time in silence, and the chance to undertake various important tasks. The parishes, however, don't seem to be able to match these expectations. Some of the active ycv's leave the church as young adults. The threshold from youth work to the other forms of parish activity seems to often be too high. The phenomenon is also influenced by many adolescents moving to another municipality as a young adult. They may never build a connection to their new local parish. Thus it is important for the parishes to consider how to strengthen an adolescent's experience of belonging in a community larger than the local parish: the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland. Inviting those moving to the municipality to join the community should be at the very heart of the activity of each parish.

It is good to speak about the meaning of the membership openly with the adolescents. The parish is primarily a spiritual community and a spiritual home. Simultaneously it is a place where one can make a difference. The members of a parish should know its structures and ways of working. Thus it is important that the parish administration and its position as a part of the church became known to the adolescent during their time as a ycv. Adolescents' own opportunities to participate and make a difference in the parish (e.g. to vote at the age of 16 and to stand for election at the age of 18) should be a standard part of the contents of ycv activity. Adolescents seeking out positions for volunteers and voting in the elections should be actively supported.



WHAT IF...

- ... the membership of parish and church membership were consciously kept in the general awareness during the ycv activity? Church is a common spiritual home for people.
- ... democracy education were seen as a natural part of ycv activity? Everybody can influence in the parish and the church. Those participating in ycv activity should be familiarised with the opportunities to make a difference in the parish and the church, encouraged to vote in parish elections and, and encouraged to stand for election.
- ... we courageously spoke with the adolescents about money and gave the adolescents an opportunity to influence the budget of the ycv activity?
- ... listening to the adolescents' interests we built connections to other parishes in Finland and abroad?
- ... we broadened the ycv's understanding of the church by encouraging ycv's to take part in ycv swaps thus bringing tidings from the other ELCF parishes? This could be done through Isoet ry.

IT IS A GREAT MIRACLE, THIS CONGREGATION OF THE LORD

The parish lives with the constant tension between assembling and acting. On one hand, the followers of Jesus have always gathered together, on the other they have always acted to help other people wherever the need for help has become apparent. Nowadays there is a lot of talk about delving into the peoples' ranks. This refers to the parish being visible in peoples' everyday life – in malls, hospitals, schools. This is an important part of parish life. One of the potential problems however is the employee-centrism, where parishioners are stuck as the objects or clients of the parish activities. It is precisely in the parishioners' everyday acts of love, and actions reflecting love for one's neighbour, where the parish becomes visible. The acts of love for their part are a call to empowerment by the sacraments.

Tools for adulthood

When gazing towards adulthood in ycv activity, ycv activity is viewed through the lens of the adolescent's growth and not so much the needs of the parish. Every kind of support for the adolescent's growth carries them towards adulthood.

The contributions of ycv activity to an adolescent's growth can also be viewed from the perspective of future skills. The new 2016 curriculum for the Finnish comprehensive school heavily emphasises transversal learning described as the skill of the new millennium. The perspective emphasises that the school as an institution has the responsibility of equipping the students for a future that we can neither describe nor even fully imagine yet.

When a ycv participates in an appealing activity that carries on to the future, they receive many kinds of tools for adulthood – wisdom, insight, abilities, values, attitudes, and will. Studies have discovered that participating in such activity reinforces an adolescent's positive view of their own capability and their self-confidence. An adolescent develops positive connections to different people and institutions. An adolescent grows to experience sympathy and act in an ethically sustainable way. These together increase involvement and its experience in one's life, family, and society.

How to, on the road towards adulthood, also develop a welcome, meaningful parish connection and Christian identity? According to the ycv's experiences ycv activity has given them little in terms of critical thinking, questions related to faith, and the opportunity to talk about them. Even though ycv's have positive experiences of services of worship during ycv activity, only fewer than one in five of the ycv's in the study felt that the Sunday services would nurture their faith.

ycv activity guides towards holistic adulthood in offering healthy relationships and pleasant activity, but also a place for religious growth. ycv activity supporting this growth has room for experienced and affiliated faith. Additionally many teens need space for searching and contact with other seekers. There's a place in ycv activity for searching faith when the adolescent is allowed to build their own understanding of faith even through doubt, critical evaluation, and calling everything into question. Personal conviction and commitment can be achieved through providing room to test alternatives to one's earlier ways of thinking.

Faith community needs to also have room for those who live the searching phase. The importance of critical thinking and searching faith is also underlined by the phase of structuring one's identity in adolescence and early adulthood. A growing adolescent searches for their own values and their own way of life. If the faith offered by ycv activity comes through as accepting the basic story of the community without critique, a growing adolescent may experience that the communal faith associated with the confirmation time no longer in touch with their life and the more essential questions regarding their identity.

The different needs of the different adolescents and the different phases of life challenge ycv activity and church employees. It must be ensured that the ycv activity offers versatile tools for experienced and affiliated faith and many kinds of opportunities to nurture one's spiritual life. On the other hand the price should not be a lack of space for questions and genuine puzzlement.

How to build a bridge towards adult parish?

In many parishes the place and role of a parishioner appears to differ a fair bit between YCV activity and the rest of the forms of work in the parish. Is acting as a YCV the high point of a parishioner's responsibility after which only less responsible, independent, and motivating tasks are offered? After the compact youth activity and the warm adolescents' community a growing YCV might have a hard time understanding the parish as a community they'd want to live in. It's necessary to stop to think about how adult parishioners perceive the congregation. What kind of a community is the growing adolescent being invited to?

YCV activity should be planned and implemented by deliberately looking to the future from the get-go. If YCV activity only looks backwards towards confirmation time, a YCV grows away from it. A wise confirmation work teacher encourages the adolescent grieving the end of the confirmation time: 'This is not the end, this is only the beginning.' Meaningful years as a confirmand and a YCV are an important part of youth but parish connection continues through life. YCV groups could actively participate in parish activity together, e.g. services of worship, events, solidarity fund raisings, camps, or diaconia work projects. It is good for the adolescents to connect with the active parishioners. Deliberate effort should be made to build the parish as a community with its communality bringing people of all ages together.

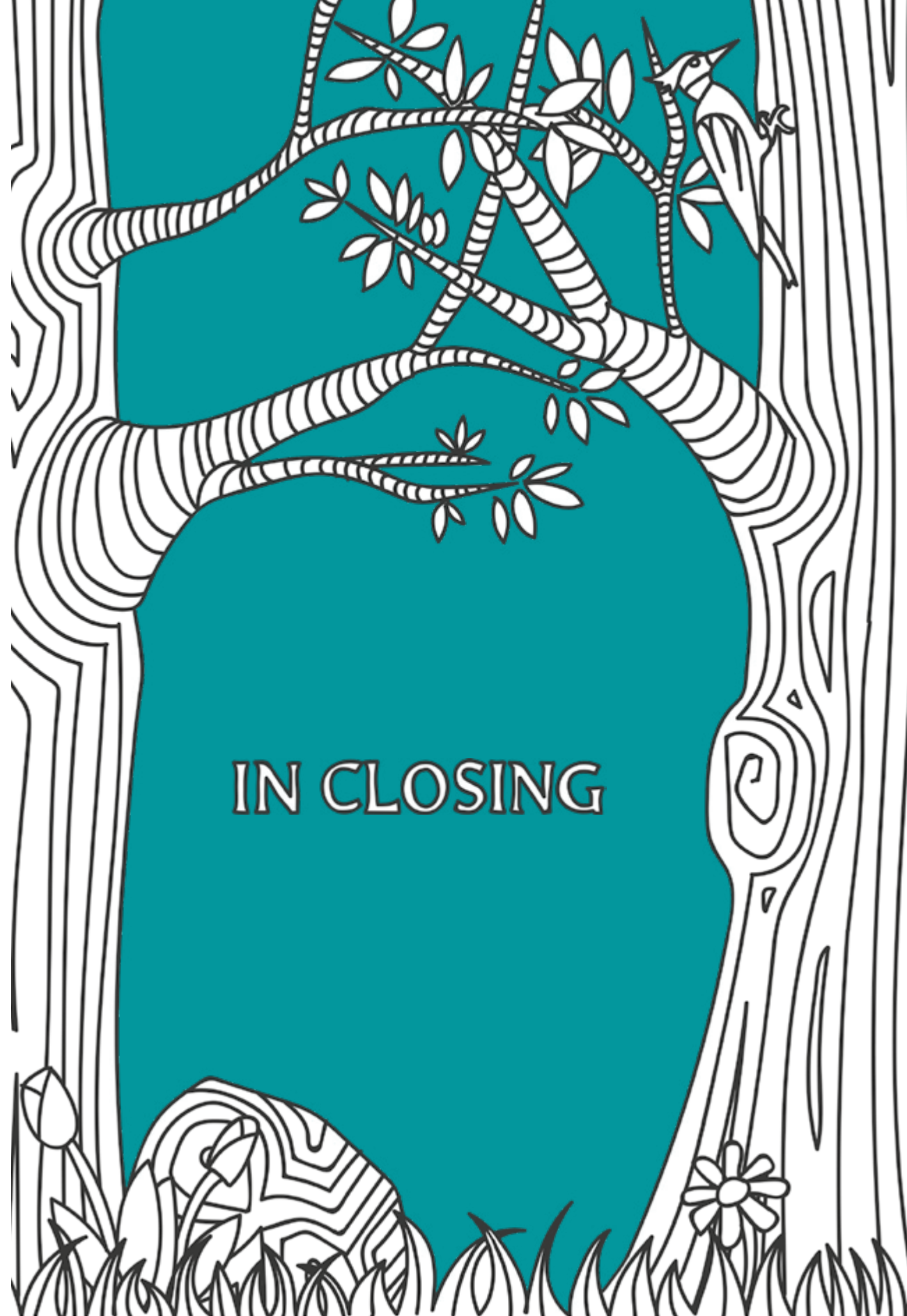
If parish YCV activity included other parish employees beyond youth workers, paths to other forms of parish activity may form more naturally. When, in YCV activity, adolescents grow attached to not only confirmation work and youth work but more broadly to the whole church and parish, connection to the parish might carry over to the post-YCV times as well. The responsibility for the adolescent's gradual shifting towards adult parish connection belongs to the whole parish and all its employees. The bridge must be built from both directions. Both, sending and invitation are needed. A growing adolescent needs a place to join.

If the growing YCV is ultimately unable to keep participating in parish activities, the church would still prefer to remain close to them. Means and materials for building a bridge towards being an adult parishioner should be purposefully sought out and supported.



WHAT IF...

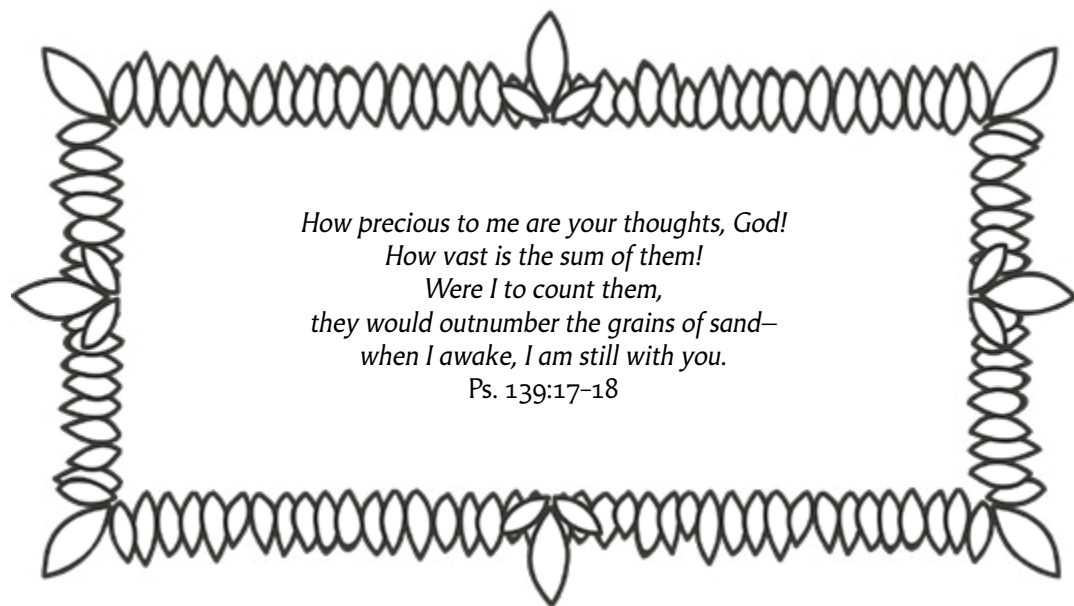
- ... active efforts were made in the adults' activity of the parish towards enabling a growing adolescent to find their place?
- ... the adult volunteers of the parish were encouraged to escort the growing YCVs and young adults moving to the municipality towards the adults' activities in the parish?
- ... YCV activity plans were presented to the adult volunteers each year, or the adult volunteers were invited to bless the YCVs?



Based on Luther we think that God's invitation to follow is serving one's neighbour. God equally invites a child, an adolescent, and an adult to the everyday tasks: to serve another human and simultaneously God.

If ycv activity builds a bridge towards finding one's own place in life, it sends the adolescent towards good growth and adulthood. Working for others' good voluntarily or even professionally can remain a gratifying, meaningful calling post-ycvhood as well. Some ycv's also find their way to become parish employees.

ycv activity is like sending waves. As the waves of the sea they always keep on moving towards the shore, so too can the meaning and influence of our work send ripples far through the tapestry of humankind, everyone passing on some of what they've gained from us. Such is God's work on earth.



Big wonders –guidelines in short

YCV ACTIVITY STRENGTHENS AN ADOLESCENT'S IN THEIR FAITH IN A TRIUNE GOD AND EQUIPS THEM FOR LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN.

THE ADOLESCENT IS A WONDER. THE STARTING POINT OF YCV ACTIVITY IS AN ADOLESCENT LIVING AND GROWING JUST THE WAY THEY ARE.

- The confirmation work and ycv activity in our church is a wonder. Every adolescent is a wonder. Their participation in the activities of the parish is a proof of God's work on earth. ycv activity is a part of parish youth work. Youth work is aimed more towards supporting the adolescent's growth than to train them for a task. A ycv is a young parishioner who needs both, appropriate amounts of responsibility in the role of an active contributor, and support for their growth. It is important that the atmosphere in the adolescents' community is permitting, open, and supportive, and that everybody be accepted the way they are, whatever stage of development they be in, and whichever questions or doubts they might harbour. Accepting everyone the way they are is the radical promise of the Christian congregation.

YCV IS A PART OF THE ADOLESCENTS' GROUP IN THE PARISH. KEY THINGS IN YCV ACTIVITY ARE SAFETY, CONNECTION, JOY, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING NOTICED.

- ycv activity is to be safe on all levels. This means respecting an individual and their boundaries on all humane levels: physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, sexually, and socially. Deep down Christianity is about safety. A safe parish and ycv community form a fruitful soil for an adolescent's growth and bear the hallmarks of a Christian parish: joy and connection. Safety is built in many different ways, e.g. a friendly gaze and courtesy, but also through the employees' example, agreed upon the ground rules and intervention in the case of an injustice.

THERE'S ROOM FOR ALL KINDS OF ADOLESCENTS IN YCV ACTIVITY. EVERYBODY IS WELCOME REGARDLESS OF THEIR OWN REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING.

- ycv activity should be dominated by an encouraging atmosphere with room for different reasons for involvement. Every adolescent has their own strengths. ycv activity and the ycv's personal growth and development can be structured upon these strengths giving them a positive sense. Different types of individuals should be grouped together to create ycv teams for confirmation groups, where the ycv's get tasks based on their aptitudes. A group composed of different kinds of ycv's proves that there's room for incompleteness in the parish. With successful grouping and the appropriate support, different ycv's can shine in their task. Everybody is allowed to be growing together.

THE COMPETENCE AND EXPERTISE NEEDED AS A YCV IS ACQUIRED BOTH IN PRACTICE BY PARTICIPATING IN PARISH LIFE, AND IN TRAINING.

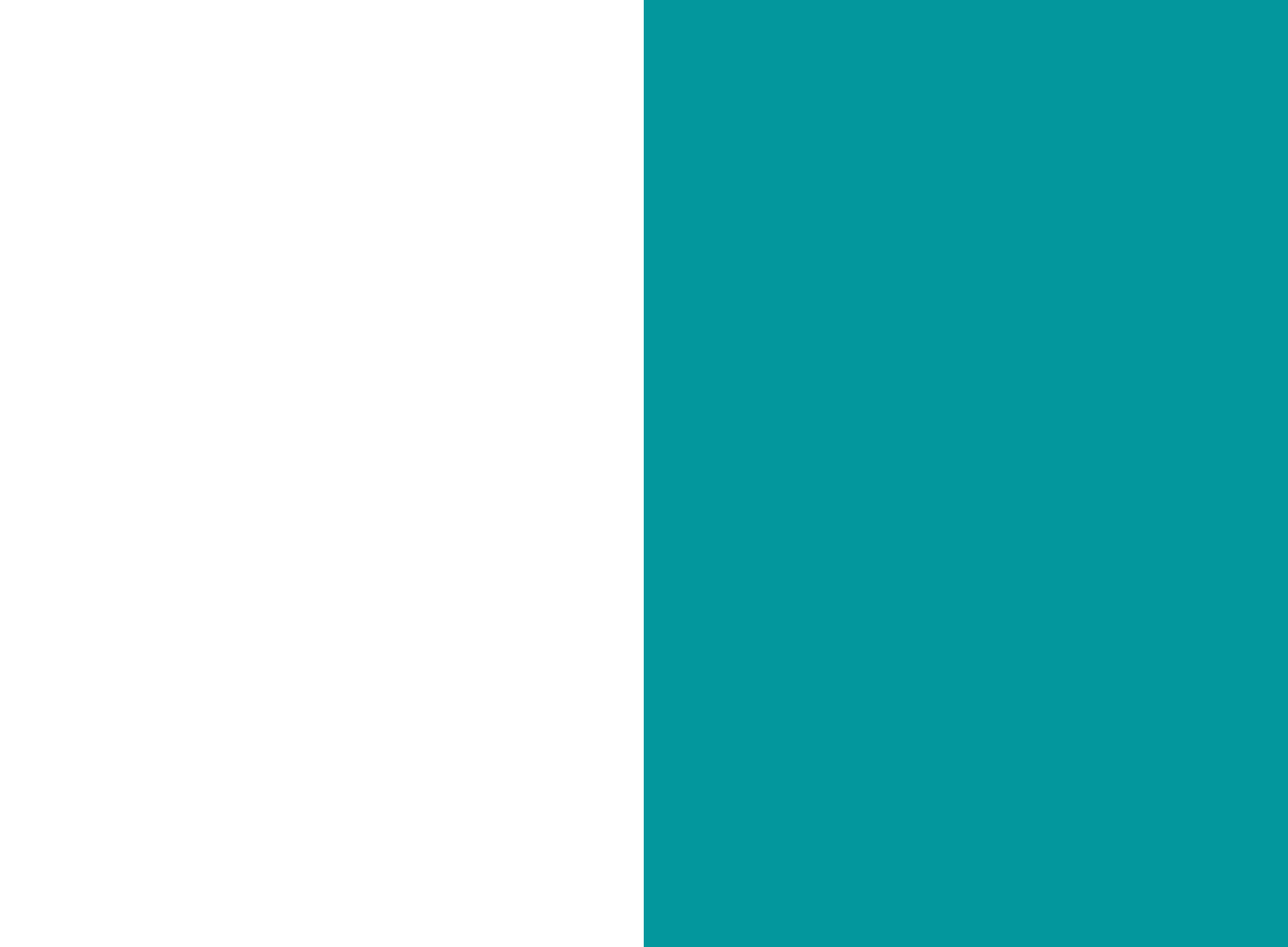
- In ycv activity, learning is a part of being together and being a part of a group in the congregation of the Christ. To grow towards ycvhood, adolescents need not only training but also contacts with friends and adults, pleasant activity and appropriate amounts of responsibility, opportunities to pause in the face of holiness, the experience of acceptance, and room for joy and sorrow.
- Slowly through various undertakings an adolescent's competence and expertise reach those of a ycv. The most important learning event is being a ycv for the first time. Good care must be taken of the ycv's. Taking care refers to simple things: enough sleep and rest, appropriate amounts of tasks and responsibility, a lot of support and encouragement.

YCVS PLAN AND IMPLEMENT THE ACTIVITY TOGETHER WITH THE EMPLOYEES.

- ycv activity should be planned, implemented, and developed together with the ycv's thus reinforcing the adolescents' involvement. ycv's needs and wishes should be heeded especially while designing ycv training. ycv's should also be involved in the planning of confirmation work. The employees should invest in supporting and coordinating the ycv's particularly during the camp. An employee's support is particularly important in the implementation of the devotional life.
- ycv's have the right to know which rights and responsibilities they have while acting as a ycv. Every ycv should have a feedback discussion during and after their time as a ycv. Those, who don't feel at home as ycv's, should be given particular attention.

YCV ACTIVITY BUILDS A BRIDGE TOWARDS THE ADULT PARISH.

- ycv activity should be designed and implemented so that from the beginning the eyes look towards the future. Meaningful confirmation time and years as a ycv are an important part of adolescence, but parish connection is lifelong. ycv activity is parish voluntary work. ycv activity should come in many forms enabling its use as a resource for other voluntary activity and its continuation to adulthood. The responsibility for the adolescents' gradual shifting towards adult parish connection belongs to the whole parish and all its employees. The bridge must be built from both ends. The growing ycv needs a community to join. In addition to sending, an invitation towards the new is also needed.





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ISBN 978-951-789-598-9



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