

# Developing Faith Companions



These handouts are provided as part of the Accompaniment Project provided by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and the Center for Ministry Development.

## A Vision for Accompaniment

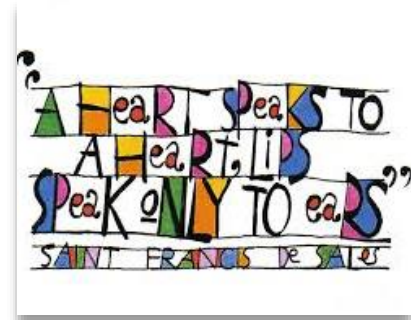
The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other....

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #169

We are reminded that accompaniment is indispensable as a way of sharing faith.

In such places...the person-to-person contact indispensable for passing on the message can happen, something whose place cannot be taken by any pastoral resource or strategy.

# 218- Christ is Alive – *Christus Vivit*  
April 2, 2019



## Empowering Parents and Faith Companions

We need to be intentional in the ways that we support and empower all of those who walk with youth in faith. This begins with families. Pope Francis reminds us:

The family continues to be the principal point of reference for young people. Children appreciate the love and care of their parents, they give importance to family bonds, and they hope to succeed in forming a family when it is their time.

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 262.

Ministry with youth has been aware of the need to include parents and families more intentionally for the last thirty years. Unfortunately, much of the attention has been focused on trying to get parents and families to come to things at the parish and do things at home and most importantly get their family to mass. This approach begins with an assumption that families are evangelized and that parents know their job but just need to be encouraged or in the case of sacramental preparation, required to help them to do the tasks of parenting for faith. The work of the New Evangelization reminds us that the challenge in our United States context is not bringing the message of Christ to people who have never heard it, the challenge is helping people who have heard the message to know that it matters; the message is about them, it is a love story about a personal God who wants to be in

their lives and with them in their everyday challenges. Youth ministry's connection to families is not about getting their support for the ministry and about getting them to do their job at home; it is about inspiring, evangelizing and ministering to the families of youth.



In addition to parents, there are many other family connections for people who could be faith companions for youth including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. There are also people who have a sacramental relationship with young people such as Godparents and Confirmation Sponsors. In many cases, these potential faith companions are just waiting for the permission and the starting point to enter into the conversation of faith with the youth to whom they are related.

We should also consider all the other relationships in the parish where youth can experience faith companionship. These would include ministerial roles such as the pastor, and parish pastoral leaders, leaders in ministry with youth and young adults, catechists, teachers, and parish ministry leaders whose role touches young people. It could also include members of the parish community whose work and vocation puts them in contact with young people such as teachers, counselors, employers, health care workers, and others in the community. Peers also play an essential role in accompaniment. Their common base of experience lays a foundation for faith witness and companionship.

We can take a significant step in becoming a parish who accompanies youth by identifying and empowering all of the faith companions in our community. What would it be like if everyone in the parish who has a connection to young people understood their role and felt equipped to pray for, provide care for, and witness faith to youth?

The role of credible adults and their cooperation is basic in the course of human development and vocational discernment. This requires authoritative believers, with a clear human identity, a strong sense of belonging to the Church, a visible spiritual character, a strong passion for education and a great capacity for discernment.

*Preparatory Document for the Synod on Youth, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, page 14*

## **Empowering Parents and Faith Companions**

### ***Parents and Faith Companions***

- Understand the process of accompanying youth in faith
- Have skills for listening
- Show empathy for youth and their families
- Provide pastoral care for youth and their families, which includes referring youth for services as needed
- Witness to their faith
- Share faith with youth and engage in faith conversations
- Pray for young people and their families Parish

## Qualities of Faith Companions

A good accompanier is able to listen to youth and share from their experience with humility and balance.

A good accompanier is a person who is balanced, a listener, a person of faith and prayer, who has the measure of his own weaknesses and frailties. Hence, he knows how to be accepting of the young people he accompanies, without moralizing and without false indulgence.

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, #102

### The Qualities of a Mentor

- being a faithful Christian who engages with the Church and the world;
- someone who constantly seeks holiness;
- someone who is a confidant without judging.
- Similarly, someone who actively listens to the needs of young people and responds in kind;
- someone deeply loving and self-aware;
- someone who recognizes his or her limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey.
- An especially important quality in mentors is the acknowledgement of their own humanity ...

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, # 246

### Reflection: Who Were Your Faith Companions?

Take a moment to reflect upon your faith life as a youth or young adult (or as an adult if you came to faith more recently.)

- Who were the family members who supported you in faith?
- Who were the other adults who supported you?
- Who were the peers who supported you?

### ***To Empower Parents and Faith Companions***

- Consider all the potential faith companions for young people
  - Family connections: Parents / Aunts / Uncles / Grandparents /siblings
  - Sacramental connections: Godparents / Sponsors
  - Ministry connections: pastor, pastoral leaders, ministry leaders, catechists
  - Community connections: teachers, counselors, community workers, employers
  - Peers
- Work to provide formation, resources and coaching for faith companions to equip them to care for and witness faith with young people

### ***Examples – In Parish Gathering of Parents and Faith Companions...***

- a mom described that she didn't feel she had faith conversations, it was always more of a debate, and she always lost. She had the chance to role play a faith conversation with a young person and heard some tips from the community to help her feel more confident.
- an older woman began sharing about the various youth she connects with regularly, youth in her family, children of friends, youth in the ministries that she is a part of. She started sharing the ways that she talks about faith and ways that she helps youth connect with and talk with their parents. The youth minister discovered a treasure here in his own backyard by finding this resource who could be such a powerful mentor for other faith companions.
- parents shared success stories by describing the ways that they create the opportunity for conversations with their teens. One dad talked about walking the dog with his adolescent daughters. Other parents talked about using car time as connect time. One mom talked about ironing her clothes in preparation for a meeting at work. She always set up the ironing board behind the couch facing the television in the family room. "There is something about the creaking sound of opening the ironing board that gets my teenage son away from his computer and onto the couch. He pretends to watch something with volume low, but really this is his chance to talk. One time, we were so engaged, I nearly scorched my favorite blouse when I re-ironed it for the fifth time."

# Parents and Faith Companions

## Reflection and Assessment:



Provide an assessment for your parish community by providing a rating on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high. If you feel that you don't have enough information to answer, select N/A (no answer.) Provide comments at the end of each section

### Youth

1. Have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ sustained through their Catholic faith  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
2. Have faith companions, adults and other youth, to guide their journey of discipleship  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
3. Can identify five caring adults in their life  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

### Pastors and Parish Leaders

4. Understand the process of accompanying youth in faith  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

### Ministry Programs that Include Youth

5. Promote faith sharing relationships with peers and adult faith companions  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

### Parents and Faith Companions

6. Understand the process of accompanying youth in faith  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
7. Have skills for listening  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
8. Show empathy for youth and their families  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
9. Provide pastoral care for youth and their families, which includes referring youth for services as needed  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

10. Witness to their faith

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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11. Share faith with youth and engage in faith conversations

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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12. Pray for young people and their families

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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**Comments**

**Areas of Strength**

**Areas to Grow**

## Parent and Faith Companion – Needs Assessment Questionnaire

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### **Support**

How interested would you be in the following areas of support for you as a parent or faith companion to youth?

**N – None** I am not at all interested in this kind of program or activity.

**S – Some** I am interested and would try to participate or be involved.

**M – Much** I am very interested and would go out of my way to participate.

### **Networking**

- Get together with other parents and faith companions for networking and support.

N S M

Comments

### **Coaching**

- Someone to talk to about companioning youth in faith.

N S M

Comments

### **Resources**

- Resources for knowing how to answer tough faith questions and for understanding the adolescent faith journey

N S M

Comments

- Resources to help youth with pastoral care issues like anxiety, stress, and depression.

N S M

Comments

### **Training**

- Training for knowing how to answer tough faith questions and for understanding the adolescent faith journey

N S M

Comments

- Training to help youth with pastoral care issues like anxiety, stress, and depression.

N S M

Comments

### Other

- What are other ways you would like to be supported?

Comments