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Building a Youth Confirmation Retreat

With so many well-crafted resources available, there is no need to write your own. Prayerfully adding to that curriculum is well worth the time, as it allows God to co-create a program that is molded to the needs of your community's youth confirmands.

For our last confirmation class, I used Jenifer Gamber's [*My Faith, My Life: A Teen's Guide to the Episcopal Church: Leader's Guide \(Revised Edition\)*](#). This program has two schedule options, one with 10 sessions, the other 6 sessions plus a retreat. To best fit the needs of our youth and our bishop's visit, we opted for the latter—6 sessions and one day retreat that fit the needs of our youth, our congregation, and our community.

Learning to Talk with God, Learning to Share God's Love

We modeled our retreat on Gamber's cross-structure analogy. This is a visual metaphor: the vertical line represents our relationship with God, while the horizontal line represents our relationship with others. While spending the day together, some of the activities were meant to be spiritual practices between us and God, and others were for us to demonstrate God's love in the world. (Page numbers refer to *My Faith, My Life Leader's Guide*.)

- 9:30 am Introduction to our retreat, and high/lows candleing

Activities: Sacraments as Gifts (#23) and What are Sacraments? (#24)
review (pp. 64-65)

- 10:00 am Plant seeds in our Community Garden Plot
- 10:30 am Walk to Labyrinth at a nearby church

Activity: Praying with a Finger Labyrinth (p. 66)

- 11:00 am Lunch at a nearby restaurant
- 12:00 - 1:00 pm Acts of Service

Bake cookies for after-church hospitality hour

Fill Blessing bags (with toiletry items) for our homeless ministry

Clean around the church to prepare for bishop visit

Prayer beads (Walk to local bead store) p. 101

p. 65 Activity: Praying with Anglican Prayer Beads

- 2:00 pm Scavenger Hunt for Sacred Symbols (p. 62) in Sanctuary

p. 66 Activity: Praying with Icons

- 2:30 pm Work on "I believe" creed statements in Sanctuary
- 2:45 pm Water plants and journal in Quiet Garden
- 3:00 Closing prayer/Dismissal

You could easily adapt this schedule to include activities that represent the ministries and locations in and around your church that will add the most meaning for your confirmands. The prayer bead activity at the local bead store was great because each youth had so many beads to choose from that they were able to create personalized prayer beads to remind them of the day and their confirmation.

The walking trips and service projects allowed for a lot of casual discussion time which helped us bond as a group and get to know one another better. We took photos during our day and created a collage for our church's newsletter so that the entire congregation had the opportunity to see the good work of our confirmands.

Our retreat was the favorite event of our youth and leaders, and we adapted activities from My Faith, My Life to create a meaningful day of spiritual reflection. We also included service opportunities to explore the many ministries of our church and field trips to a few locations around our neighborhood which made it fun and active! In designing your own retreat, I recommend that you take inventory of the landmarks and unique locations near your church to personalize the experience.

Kari Robinson is a Children's & Youth Minister in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego. Kari is passionate about helping children and youth develop authentic relationships with Christ, and demonstrating God's love for us by serving others. One of her favorite parts of her work is developing creative programming for children and youth!

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