The Catholic 20s Group

A model for parish-based ministry with Catholic young adults in their 20s
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PREFACE

This manual provides an overview of a new model of young adult ministry. It is the fruit of the combined experience of many different kinds of young adult groups in different parts of the country. It puts down in writing some of the best insights that have emerged in a long process of trial and error.

The purpose of this manual is twofold. The first purpose is to communicate what this model of ministry looks like when it is fully implemented. The model given in this manual is not theoretical. It is a synthesis of what has happened and is still happening. Our hope is that others may find this vision helpful in their own efforts in young adult ministry—either as a model to implement directly, or as a helpful point of reference as they develop their own form of young adult ministry.

The second purpose of this manual is to lay out some practical suggestions for how to go about establishing this sort of ministry in a parish, deanery or diocese. The manual first lays out the vision of this model—its first purpose—and only then in some later chapters suggests how to go about establishing this ministry from scratch.

It is very important for the reader to understand that these are two different objectives. Otherwise, the model presented here will likely seem impossibly burdensome and wide-ranging—the sort of thing that would be far beyond the resources of the ordinary parish to sustain. But it is not possible to implement this model with all its various aspects and activities immediately; it takes time. A group must develop organically, starting small and then gradually expanding. Different elements are added in a natural way as the group grows and its members make their particular interests known. It may take a long time for a group to implement fully the model given here, or it may happen quickly—it depends on the membership and circumstances of each group. Moreover, in some cases, it may not be appropriate even to try for a complete implementation of this model: many groups, for example, may simply want to focus on establishing the weekly meeting that is the anchor of this model of ministry.

All of those involved in developing this model at one point had little idea of how to go about young adult ministry. What we had in common was the recognition that there was a great need and a desire to meet that need. We are well aware, therefore, of how challenging this area of ministry can seem, and how much need there is for mutual encouragement—and also, looking back, of how much God can do with something as simple as the desire to serve. If nothing else, we hope that this manual will serve as an encouragement to others, simply by being a sign that God is very much at work among young adults, and that the Holy Spirit God is renewing the Church with the peace and grace that are only God’s to give.
This manual has come to be written through the contributions of many different people, but most especially the young adults and staff of St Gertrude’s Parish in Cincinnati, Ohio, who developed the 20s group model in a team effort over long period of experimentation and refinement. Special thanks are also due to many personnel of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Spirit and Truth organization. Their contributions have been invaluable: their experience, their ideas, their materials and resources (especially the Spirit & Truth manual), and their generosity with their insight and feedback have been exceptionally helpful in refining this model of ministry and writing this manual.
IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Establishing a parish-based 20s group can involve many issues of legal liability. Therefore, it is imperative that organizers respect civil laws and the guidelines of their parish and diocese, especially for activities that occur on parish grounds, or that involve the consumption of alcohol. Activities that involve the risk of physical harm, however minimal, should be organized with prudence. Furthermore, this manual is offered “as is”, and no legal liability is accepted for problems that may occur in the course of implementing its suggestions.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

There are many positive trends among Catholic young adults in the United States. There is widespread desire for authenticity in personal relationships, especially in one’s relationship with God; interest in developing strong communities; restless dissatisfaction with materialistic lifestyles; compassionate concern for the poor and afflicted; and often resolute determination to grow in the knowledge and imitation of Christ. Furthermore, Catholic young adults are less likely to view ecclesial controversies through an ideological lens, having grown up well after Vatican II. There is a spirit of freedom and creativity in their approach to matters of faith. In short, this present moment is clearly a moment of grace and opportunity, with many signs of hope for the future.

As yet, however, the Church and its ministers, and Catholic young adults themselves, are only beginning to discover ways to establish parish-based young adult groups that would harness these very positive indicators—groups that would unite Catholic young adults in Christ-centered peer communities and amplify their own distinctive voice within the Catholic community.

The need for parish-based young adult groups is evident. It is universally acknowledged that community is one of the most prominent felt needs among young adults. Similarly, there is widespread agreement that the Church needs to do more to welcome young adults into the life of their local parish communities. Parish-based young adult groups respond directly to the felt needs of young adults as well as the Church’s desire to incorporate young adults into parish life. They are only one piece of the Church’s ministry to young adults, but based on the experience of many young adult ministers, they are one of the most effective ways to draw young adults more fully into the life of their parishes. They are also one of the most effective ways to evangelize young adults on the margins, because they provide them an experience of Christian community, and not just one-time events or intellectual engagement.

This manual provides a model for parish-based young adult ministry. It is based on the lived experience of many young adults and young adult ministers. As such, it is the fruit of experimentation and discussion, of success and also of failure. It is by no means a finished product. Nonetheless, it has been a source of grace for many, and we are confident that its basic vision is highly effective in a wide range of contexts.
It is our hope that this manual will give those interested in parish-based young adult ministry the benefit of our trial and error, and some ideas of where to begin. In so doing, we hope to facilitate the work of the Spirit in drawing together today’s Catholic young adults more deeply into the Church’s communion and the Church’s service to the world.

**The vision of this model of young adult ministry**

The principal objective of this model of young adult ministry is to create a community of young adults that is closely attached to a parish, especially the parish’s celebration of the Eucharist. This community is centered on a weekly meeting that usually includes Eucharistic adoration with contemporary music (but need not, for groups that do not feel it is appropriate to their needs), followed by discussion or an occasional lecture, and then socializing at a local bar or restaurant. This weekly meeting then becomes the anchor for a variety of other activities—social events, service, social justice outreach, sports, retreats, outdoor events, and whatever else people think up. The theological and pastoral orientation is one rooted in the teachings of the faith in a non-ideological, easy going manner that neither compromises the truth, nor beats people over the head, so that young adults of all backgrounds immediately feel welcomed and accepted.

The leadership of the group is provided by a core team of young adults who are assisted by a priest chaplain, and possibly an older lay person or deacon delegated by the pastor if the priest’s involvement is limited. It is a consensus-based model that divides the decision-making and workload among a variety of young adults. In this way, it avoids putting the weight of responsibility on one or two young adult leaders and establishes a cooperative context in which to negotiate the inevitable conflicts that will arise. The involvement of a parish minister ensures that the group has a close connection to the parish and the universal Church, but without compromising the creativity and independence of the young adults on the core team who provide the group’s leadership and direction.

**Networking, collaboration, and feedback**

This manual is the fruit of networking and collaboration among young adults and young adult ministers. This approach would have never come to be if different groups and individuals had not sought each other out to meet, discuss, and learn from each other. The spirit of networking and communion that led to this group is not accidental: it is essential to its
spirituality. Young adults in today’s culture thrive on networking in a variety of ways, and the possibilities of communication in the modern world provide extensive opportunities for ecclesial networking.

For this reason, by its very nature, this model of young adult ministry is designed to be adaptable, and to be open to new ideas and suggestions. We encourage all those interested in this model to experiment with new formats and new ideas—though always making sure to establish a way for the core team to evaluate their preliminary implementation before permanently incorporating them into the group.
I. Mission statement

Here is a sample mission statement:

The [Parish Name] 20s group is a parish-based community of young adults, who seek to draw closer to Christ and his Church through prayer, friendship, discussion, study, and service. In addition to weekly meetings, we come together for a wide range of events: social gatherings, liturgies, service opportunities, athletic events, outdoor trips, retreats, conferences, etc. New members from the parish and beyond (ages 18-32, single and married, Catholic and non-Catholic) are always welcome to join us for any meeting or event.

We hope that young Catholics and other Christians will feel welcome to come and get to know us, and see the benefits of meeting and socializing with other young adults who seek to live their faith in the 21st century!

A particular group may or may not want to adopt this mission statement. Nonetheless, the key elements of the sample one given here (described below) should be incorporated in some way into a Catholic 20s group mission statement, and more importantly, the group’s own understanding of its identity.

II. Commentary on the mission statement

The following commentary identifies and explains the crucial elements of the Catholic 20s group:

1. “Parish-based but open to all”

It is important that the group understand itself as part of a particular parish. The group as a whole should have an orientation toward getting involved in the life of the parish – weekend liturgies, parish programs, service opportunities in the parish or sponsored by the parish, etc. At
the same time, it should be open to all, and there is no expectation that every member will get involved in the parish. Young adult groups typically require a critical mass of members to thrive, and one parish usually cannot supply enough young adults. Furthermore, if something good is happening, word will quickly get around and young adults will inevitably be drawn to the group. So the group should welcome non-parishioners to join, but it should nonetheless orient itself to the parish, and understand itself to be part of the parish. Members who belong to different parishes nonetheless find their involvement in their home parishes strengthened by the fact that the group is connected to the concrete life of one particular parish. Eventually, if the group grows enough, members of other parishes should be encouraged to start a group in their home parishes.

2. “Community of young adults”

The primary purpose of a Catholic 20s group is not a single activity, whether to evangelize or to catechize or to serve the poor or to encourage participation in Sunday Eucharist. The primary purpose is to create a community of young adults united in their faith. It is important, therefore, that the group maintain a balance in its activities, in order to appeal to a wide variety of personalities and faith backgrounds. Generally what will happen is that each individual will be interested in certain activities and not others, and then, as friendships and relationships grow, people will give other things a try and often find that they like them more than they expected.

3. “Communion with Christ and his Church”

Ecclesial groups cannot compete with the secular world when it comes to social events, sports, and other such activities. The secular world offers such activities “professionally,” and it does it well. However, a Catholic 20s group has something the secular world does not have: communion with Christ and his Church. It is important not only to include these elements in a group, but to highlight them confidently and unabashedly (which is not to say unnaturally or obnoxiously), because it is precisely these elements that nobody else has, sociologically speaking. Moreover, we know by faith that, regardless of how people respond to them in a particular time and place, these elements are indeed intrinsically attractive, and the source of authentic joy and happiness. This fact should inspire a certain confidence that what the Catholic
20s group has to offer is good in itself, and does not need to be downplayed in order to attract young adults.

4. “Prayer, friendship, discussion, study, and service”

These elements seem to be the main elements necessary for the group to thrive. The health of the group will be jeopardized if any element is missing or – and this is an important point – disproportionately emphasized.

5. “Regular weekly meetings”

The anchor of the group is the regular weekly meeting, held on a weekday night. Wednesday or Thursday nights are ideal because they do not compete with weekends and especially Sundays, and provide a welcome break in the middle of the workweek. Although the group needs multiple meetings, this is the main meeting, and it is generally the best attended. During this weekly meeting, the group should give special care to welcoming new members, and to making sure that the evening’s activities do not demand too much of newcomers – by becoming too personal, by presuming more intellectual knowledge of the faith than might be appropriate, etc.

The main elements of this regular meeting are threefold (as will be discussed in more depth later):

(1) An hour of Eucharistic adoration and contemporary music, with a brief homily. This adoration should be geared toward young adults, but open to the entire parish. This time slot can be substituted with other forms of prayer or dropped entirely, depending on the needs of the group.

(2) An hour for introductions at another location, followed by discussion or a speaker. From here on, the meeting is only for the young adults.

(3) Departure for a restaurant/bar/coffeeshouse or some other kind of social gathering, perhaps in the parish center.

Everybody is welcome to come to any or all parts of the evening. The time allocated to the different segments of the evening may need to be modified according to particular circumstances. Nonetheless, each segment should usually be part of a weekly meeting (allowing for exceptions from time to time).
This regular meeting must be weekly. Bi-weekly or monthly meetings are not frequent enough. Those who miss one meeting end up out of the loop for weeks. Weekly meetings, however, allow people to miss meetings without jeopardizing their connection to the community. A club or discussion group can function on a less regular basis, but communities require frequency of contact. Ironically, our experience has been that by having more frequent meetings, people come more often, with more commitment and more enthusiasm. In consequence, those who would only come less frequently due to other commitments, find a thriving community whenever they do decide to come. Moreover, the attraction of being part of a thriving community is such that people often start to restructure their other commitments, in order to be able to come more often. Frequent meetings meet the needs of those more interested being involved, and the energy of these more active members, and the ensuing network of friendship that they develop, creates a sort of gravitational pull that draws in those on the margins.

Some conventional wisdom holds that weekly meetings are too frequent for young adults. It is certainly true that many young adults cannot or will not commit to weekly meetings, but there are many who want to gather weekly or more than weekly. Furthermore, to our knowledge, there is no model of young adult ministry with less than weekly meetings that has succeeded in generating a thriving community, whereas there are many weekly models that have succeeded.

The key to successful weekly meetings is that they require low maintenance and low preparation, even while offering something substantial for those attending. This will be discussed at length further on.

6. “A wide range of events”

Besides the weekly meetings, there are other events: one-time events or gatherings, and other kinds of regular meetings. The one-time events include parties; service projects; special liturgies; camping trips; outings; retreats; mission trips; pilgrimages; etc. The regular meetings include bible studies; regular service commitments; monthly Sunday dinners; women’s groups; weekly ultimate Frisbee games; etc. In order to foster creativity, it is important that members feel encouraged to propose whatever ideas they have at the monthly core team meetings.
7. “New members from the parish and beyond are always welcome to attend any meeting or event.”

It is essential that new members feel explicitly and personally welcomed when they start to attend meetings. The main weekly meeting always includes introductions and some sort of icebreaker question, so that whenever someone new shows up, they feel on equal footing with everybody else. Similarly, once a group is established, it is good for the core team to plan special events with the particular goal of welcoming members who have only recently started attending group meetings. Care should be taken, however, that this welcoming is not be forced or artificial, in order to avoid any inauthenticity in relationships, or any cult-like feel to meetings. The purpose is to make sure that, in a natural way, the group is oriented to welcoming newcomers so that everybody immediately feels at home and valued. This welcoming orientation is a crucial dimension of the Catholic 20s group community. It also encourages new membership, which is critical to the group’s long term success, and helps the group to avoid cliquishness.

8. “Ages 18-32”

The Catholic 20s group is specifically geared toward young adults in their 20s. Unfortunately, those older than a certain cut-off age (thirty-two or thereabouts) who inquire about the group must be informed that this group is not for them. Although this can be hard for people to hear when they cannot find a healthy Catholic community of their peers, it is necessary to preserve the mission of the group. Otherwise the group will constantly drift older and older, so that those in their early 20s end up deterred from participating in the group. This “aging out” is widely regarded as one of the most difficult problems of young adult ministry.

Every effort should be made, however, to direct older young adults toward appropriate ecclesial groups or, if possible, to assist them to develop their own group, perhaps in conjunction with the 20s group (say, by joining the 20s group for adoration). If an older young adult becomes difficult or problematic, and members of the core team do not feel comfortable asking him or her to leave, it can sometimes be helpful to enlist the chaplain to explain with sensitivity that it is no longer appropriate for him or her to attend group activities.
9. “Single and married”

The Catholic 20s group should welcome all young adults, and particularly married couples, who may be less likely to attend. To this end it is very helpful if the group can provide childcare, in order to foster the participation of single parents and married couples with children. Having married couples involved is win-win for the group: young married couples are often looking for peer communities, and singles benefit from their presence. Married couples model married life to their peers, and also bring a certain measure of stability to the group, since their very presence indicates that the group is not simply a way to meet a potential spouse. Nonetheless, it will likely be the case that most members will be unmarried. Married couples, especially those with children, generally tend not have as much time for such a group.

10. “Catholic and non-Catholic”

It is important that, without compromising its Catholics identify, the group welcome both Catholics and non-Catholics. This can be done in a natural way by being especially attentive to framing faith discussions in ways that emphasize the positive. This allows for open discussion of even distinctively Catholic beliefs that would be controversial among other Christians (say, the nature of the Eucharist or the role of the bishops, etc.) without running the risk of seeming disrespectful to the beliefs of non-Catholics. It is also helpful for people to keep in mind that on any given week new non-Catholic members might attend.

III. Website description

Many young adults will likely hear about a Catholic 20s group for the first time on the internet. It is important, therefore, that the home page give a concise and welcoming description of the group, whether or not it includes an explicit mission statement.

Here is a sample website description that incorporates the sample mission statement:

Welcome!

The [Parish Name] 20s group is a parish-based community of young adults who seek to draw closer to Christ and his Church through prayer, friendship, discussion, study, and
service. In addition to weekly meetings, we come together for a wide range of events: social gatherings, liturgies, service opportunities, athletic events, outdoor trips, retreats, conferences, etc. New members from the parish and beyond (ages 18-32, single and married, Catholic and non-Catholic) are always welcome to join us for any meeting or event.

We hope that young Catholics and other Christians will feel welcome to come and get to know us and see the benefits of meeting and socializing with other young adults who seek to live their faith in the 21st century!

What we're about!

Our group originated from several young adults in the parish who were seeking fellowship and spiritual growth with other young Christians. The group was founded in [Month, Year] and has been growing and developing ever since.

Our main weekly meeting is on [Day of Weekly Meeting] nights at [Parish Name] Church. From 7-8 pm, we gather in the church for Eucharistic adoration and contemporary music. From 8-9 pm we meet in the parish center for a discussion or speaker. Afterwards we head out to a bar/restaurant or have some kind of gathering at the parish center. Everybody is welcome to come to any or all parts of the evening. Other meetings and events are planned throughout the week.

The focus of our group is twofold. On the one hand, we seek to foster a lighthearted spirit and an enjoyable and friendly atmosphere. On the other hand, we are serious about deepening our communion with Christ and his Church in a society that sometimes challenges our faith. Thus, we hope to combine fellowship with prayer and faith in order to promote an open, vibrant Christian culture, and the mutual encouragement of Christian life among members of the group.

We strive to reach young adults in their twenties through prayer, study, service, fellowship, faith sharing and friendships. Each individual brings unique gifts and talents to the group. Our group continues to flourish because of the new addition of young adults with varying talents, personalities, backgrounds and experiences. It is always exciting to see so many new faces each week. We hope you feel welcome to join us!
CHAPTER 3
THE CORE TEAM

I. Overview

The administration and governance of the Catholic 20s group is provided by a core team of young adult volunteers and a chaplain and/or advisor. It does not rest on any single individual. Some core team members have particular responsibilities, while others simply participate in core team meetings and volunteer to assist with occasional events.

The core team meets monthly. Meetings are led by the secretary or president, and decisions are made by consensus through a process of conversation and discussion. Votes are taken only when necessary.

Furthermore, to minimize competition and encourage a cooperative spirit, there are no elections. The president is appointed for one year by the chaplain, after receiving nominations from group members. The remaining positions are filled at an annual meeting by consensus, in a way that will be explained below. Moreover, to foster transparency and ownership, any 20s group member is welcome to join the core team at any time as a member-at-large.

If the group has a budget, the core team oversees the distribution of funds.

The core team should agree upon some sort of written description of its internal governance that is posted on the group’s website for all to read.

II. Description of the core team (should be posted on group website)

The leadership of the 20s group is provided by a core team of young adults and its chaplain and/or advisor. The core team organizes meetings and events and makes policy decisions. However, the core team welcomes feedback and suggestions from the entire 20s group. It is a non-elected body, composed of those interested in giving their time to organization and leadership.

Conscious that “if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor,” the core team’s first priority is developing and maintaining authentic communion with Christ and each other. In this spirit, members seek to pray for each other and help carry each other’s burdens –
in all things, “striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3) Core team members should resolve any disagreements promptly, according to the guidelines laid out by Christ in Matthew 18:15-20, so that these disagreements serve rather than harm the group’s communion.

The core team meets regularly. Anybody interested can join at any time by contacting the core team president.

III. Organizational principles (should be posted on group website)

The following are the principles that should guide the core team:

1. As the core team discusses various options, the goal is consensus rather than sheer majority rule. Hence the discussions should be oriented toward proposals that recognize everybody’s concerns, and solutions that are both/and rather than either/or. Nonetheless, when important decisions must be made, and discussions are at an impasse, matters will need to be resolved by a vote, though even then charity should guide the proceedings. The consensus-based model ensures that the core team moves ahead as a unit, and it also inspires proposals that nobody would have thought of individually.

2. All major decisions are the prerogative of the entire core team. Consequently, important proposals, ideas, and concerns should be raised with the entire core team. Minor matters can be handled by the appropriate individual or committee.

3. In the core team’s discussions, decisions, and event-planning, the chaplain or advisor may need to exercise some oversight, especially in the light of pastoral concerns.

4. Every decision made at a core team meeting should have someone assigned to take charge of its implementation.

5. To avoid burn-out, core team members should always feel free to step back either temporarily or indefinitely, whenever their responsibilities start to feel burdensome, or something comes up in their lives that demands their attention.

6. The core team will meet every month. When possible, an agenda should be distributed a few days beforehand, and minutes sent out within a week.

7. Core team members serve for a period of one year.
8. Every year the core team will undertake a process of reflection and evaluation to consider how the group is doing. The purpose of this self-evaluation is to take stock of what is going well, and also to see if there are any areas that need improvement, and if so, how to set about it.

IV. How core team positions are assigned

All positions are voluntary. Every year, the main weekly meeting is given over to a discussion of the core team by its current members, where everybody describes their position, and what they actually do. At this meeting, all group members are asked to prayerfully consider taking a role on the core team. The next immediate step is to ask for nominations for the position of president.

Selecting the president

The president is selected by a nomination process. Nominations are sent to the chaplain or advisor over a period of a couple weeks. During this time, the chaplain or advisor prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and considers the nominees. Then the chaplain or advisor asks somebody if he or she is willing to serve as president for the coming year. If that person accepts, he or she is the new president.

All other positions

Shortly after the president is appointed, a special meeting of the core team is held to fill all other positions. This special meeting is open to anybody who is interesting in being involved in the core team. Individuals volunteer by writing down on a sheet of paper those position(s) in which they would be willing to serve for the coming year. The papers are tallied simultaneously, and the results noted on newsprint or a marker board. This process encourages people to state their true preferences. Otherwise, individuals tend to be silent if someone else indicates interest in a particular position first, but because the self-nomination is simultaneous and secret, people more free to state their honest preferences. If individuals are interested in more than one position, they should volunteer for all of them, even though they will only take one. This makes it easier to assign positions when more than one person is interested in a particular position.
If there are more than one volunteer for a given position, there are two possibilities. Either volunteers withdraw their names, or multiple persons serve together. If multiple persons take on a role together, those persons will discuss among themselves and select one person to be the main contact for that role, with the rest serving as committee members. If all of the positions are not filled after this annual meeting, the new president will advertise these positions among the entire 20s group until they are filled. Conversely, the lack of interest in a certain position may indicate that the group no longer needs that position, and that it should be dropped.

Due to the risk of burn-out and overwork, one person should not take on multiple core team positions, except in cases of strict necessity. However, sometimes it is advisable for one person to take on multiple roles on a temporary basis, until another volunteer responds to the new president’s recruiting efforts.

**Members-at-large**

Members-at-large are members who participate in core team meetings without having any particular position or responsibilities. Anyone can become a member-at-large at any time simply by contacting the president and starting to attend core team meetings.

**Small group discussion leaders**

There can be any number of small group leaders, whose role is to help lead discussions at the weekly meeting. They need not attend core team meetings if they do not wish to do so. The core team may want to arrange for small group leader training occasionally throughout the year. A member of the parish staff may be able to assist with this training.

**V. Annual review**

Every year, the core team should undertake a general review of how things are going midway through its term of service. First surveys are distributed to the group with few general essay questions (see appendix for a sample survey), either by paper or by email. One of the core members collates the responses. Then core team members meet once or twice for the purpose
of discussing the surveys, offering their own thoughts on how things are going, and proposing how to go about addressing any concerns that have been raised.

VI. Occasional planning retreats

The core team may also find it beneficial to arrange a day-long planning retreat from time to time to build community and clarify its objectives, especially when a group is first starting up. Although such planning retreats can be held on parish grounds, it is often preferable to go somewhere different. The core team may want to contact local religious order communities to see if they may be able to host a day long gathering. The planning retreat should include time for prayer and reflection as well as discussion.
CHAPTER 4
THE WEEKLY MEETING

I. Overview

The main weekly meeting has three parts:

- prayer, usually Eucharistic adoration
- faith discussion (or lecture)
- social gathering, usually at a local restaurant/bar/coffeehouse

Groups should feel great freedom to improvise based on particular circumstances. However, because the weekly meeting is important to the life of the group, adjustments to the weekly meeting format should always be made with great care and with a strong consensus among core team members.

N.B. This chapter provides many details for the actual structure of various parts of the weekly meeting that have proven effective in concrete experience. Particular groups may or may not want to follow every suggestion.

II. Elements of a successful weekly meeting

The following elements are very important for the success of the weekly meeting:

1. Accessible and welcoming atmosphere

The weekly meeting serves as the key spiritual and social anchor for an intentional community of Catholic young adults. Moreover, it is the most natural point of entry for new members.

These two primary aspects of the weekly meeting must be kept in mind at all times. Therefore, when planning upcoming meetings, it is good for core team members to ask themselves these sorts of questions: Would adopting a certain regular practice over-emphasize a particular
spirituality and marginalize those who do not share it? Would newcomers find a particular evening’s meeting welcoming? Could newcomers find some aspect of it uncomfortable?

2. **Open-ended participation**

All young adults should feel encouraged to come to any or all of the three-parts of the evening. There should be no sense that people are obliged to come for the entire evening.

3. **Variety in faith discussion**

Every weekly meeting involves some kind of faith discussion. Because the focus of the weekly meeting is the formation of community, rather than any specific intellectual objective (e.g., catechesis or bible study or theology discussion), variety is important. Any single format of faith discussion, no matter how excellent, can become stale if it is used every week without variation. Moreover, different young adults will prefer different formats. For example, while discussion based on the Gospel of the day can be very positive, if the same thing happens week after week, it can become tedious and rote, especially for those who might be interested in occasionally hearing a guest speaker, or in discussing some aspect of theology. By balancing variety and stability in how it arranges the faith discussion format, the core team can make the faith discussion format more interesting, and also serve the needs of more different kinds of people, while nonetheless retaining enough stability so people have some idea of what to expect.

4. **Low maintenance structure**

It is important that the actual weekly meetings are low maintenance for the organizers. Otherwise, the workload will quickly lead to burn out and it cannot be sustained. In any case, if weekly meetings do require a great deal of planning, they are probably over-programmed: 20-somethings generally prefer things that are more free-flowing.
5. Delegation of organization to multiple individuals

Ideally each portion of the weekly meeting should be the responsibility of a different person – i.e., the music ministry, the adoration set-up, and each different faith discussion format should each have a different person in charge of it. This generates smooth organization, ensures that multiple people feel ownership of the weekly meetings, and avoids over-burdening any single individual.
III. Eucharistic adoration

Overview

Eucharistic adoration is the first portion of the weekly evening (though it can be substituted or omitted, according to the group’s needs and interests). This period of relaxed, contemplative prayer before the discussion allows people to unwind after a day of work and connect with God in such a way that, afterwards, people tend to be refreshed and cheerful. This effect then lends itself to more vital discussions. It also serves a very practical function: those who come late can drift in to the adoration without any disruption to the group. There may be times when it is necessary or desirable to omit the Eucharistic adoration, or schedule it later in the meeting, but this should be avoided.

Adoration and music

Contemporary music is a crucial element of the Eucharistic adoration that begins each meeting. Some young adults may enjoy or even prefer silence, and others may prefer purely traditional music, the Liturgy of the Hours, or the rosary. Nonetheless, a format centered on the use of contemporary music is essential for the adoration to have a broad appeal. It also adds an element of energy to the prayer which has a positive impact on the subsequent discussion and social gathering. On occasion, it may be helpful to substitute something else in place of contemporary music (or necessary, when no musician is available), but these substitutions should be infrequent.

This does not mean that more traditional aspects of Eucharistic adoration should be habitually excluded. In fact, it is beneficial if this period of adoration integrates some traditional elements of adoration and benediction, such as traditional hymns like the Adoro Te Devote, O Salutaris, or the Tantum Ergo, in English or Latin. Including these sorts of elements acquaints young adults with some of the traditional elements of the Church’s patrimony in a natural way, and it also makes it easier for young adults to transition to more standard parish events down the road. In any case, there are few contemporary hymns that are appropriate for the moments of exposition and immediately after benediction.
**Adoration and connection to larger parish community**

Some parishes have extended periods of adoration during the week. It is ideal if the weekly meeting can be timed to overlap with the last hour of the day’s adoration, in order to integrate the group more into the life of the parish. This provides a twofold benefit: the group becomes more conscious of its connection with the parish, and older parishioners feel more welcome to attend (many of whom also enjoy this style of adoration, and find praying with young adults encouraging and inspiring).

**Suggested structure for adoration**

A typical period of adoration lasts for one hour and might look something like this:

1. Exposition (with G. M. Hopkin’s English translation of the *Adore Te*)
2. Two or three contemporary songs, ideally accompanied by guitar and keyboard
3. Brief period of silence
4. The priest or deacon reads the Gospel of the day and gives a short reflection
5. Period of silence
6. Two or three contemporary songs
7. Benediction, with *Tantum Ergo* in Latin
8. Divine Praises, followed by *Salve Regina* in Latin
9. Final contemporary song

Sometimes it may happen that no musician is available. On such occasions, the contemporary songs can be substituted with silence, the Liturgy of the Hours, or the rosary. If silence is chosen, sheets with intercessory prayer intentions may be distributed, so that people, if they so choose, can pray silently for those intentions. Lists of prayer intentions for other young people can be particularly helpful and meaningful. (See the appendices for sample lists of prayer intentions.)
IV. The beginning of the faith discussion

Overview

The second segment of the meeting is the faith discussion. Typically young adults walk over from the church to somewhere else on the parish grounds where a meeting can take place. This segment includes a welcome; introductions and an opening prayer; a talk or small group discussion; and then announcements and a closing prayer.

The welcome, introductions, and opening prayer

The faith discussion segment of the meeting ideally takes place in a parish center adjacent to the church or chapel where the adoration is held, with chairs set up in a circle (or, if there will be a talk, with chairs set up facing the speaker).

Every meeting, without exception, should begin with introductions. The opening of the meeting runs like this:

1. The 20s group president starts the meeting and welcomes those present. If the president cannot be present, somebody else is delegated to lead the meeting.

2. The 20s group invites those gathered to introduce themselves, and then answer some random question, e.g., what is your favorite picnic food, what was the last book you read, favorite childhood cartoon, etc. (see appendix for more suggestions). This sort of introduction opens the meeting in a light hearted way, without making those who are shy feel like they have to say anything particularly revealing. The importance of this opening introduction cannot be overemphasized. It gives members and newcomers a chance to inject their personality into the meeting, and to get to know each without nametags. It makes newcomers feel immediately at home. It also sets the right tone for the spirituality of the group: fully human and fully alive. (Note: Although this model does not propose using nametags, many young adult groups do and have found it helpful, for example exchanging nametags at the end of the meeting and praying for that person during the coming week. Nametags may be especially helpful for very large meetings.)
N.B. – If there will be a long talk that evening, or if something special is planned that requires more time, the introductory question chosen should prompt simple, short answers. It is not omitted, however, except for the most exceptional reasons.

3. Afterwards the president leads the meeting in a brief prayer and introduces the next part of the meeting.

4. If the numbers are large, and there is a small group discussion, people break up into smaller groups (ideally around 6-9 per group). Rather than asking people to form their own groups, the president invites people to count off (1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, etc.) so that everybody ends up meeting new people.
V. The faith discussion’s rotating format

The format of the faith discussion changes every week on a monthly rotation. From time to time, there will be a 5th meeting in one month, e.g., a Fifth Thursday. Such 5th meetings provide an opportunity to experiment with other formats of faith discussion, or perhaps have a social event instead.

A typical rotation might run as follows:

Week One: Lecture

Week Two: Scripture Discussion

Week Three: Member Talk and Discussion

Week Four: Theology Discussion

Week Five: Open Format

There will be a more detailed discussion of each sort of meeting in the following sections.

The rotation should not be seen as an iron-clad structure. It is a rough organizational guide that should be adapted as needed. For example, a speaker may only be available for a lecture on the third week, and so the schedule that month will need to be adjusted. The key thing is that the format rotates from week to week.

N.B. The Scripture Study is often the easiest meeting format to prepare, and so it is a good option when other things fail, as when it happens that a speaker cancels at the last minute, or there is difficulty coming up with a format for a 5th meeting.

Personal introductions when there are small group discussions

Part of the purpose of this portion of the evening is to enable young adults to get to know each other better. Therefore, if there are small group discussions (as there with the Scripture Discussion, the Member Talk, and the Theology Discussion), it is important that introductions always precede the discussion. It is helpful to ask people to say more than just their names. For instance, one might invite people to mention a high and/or low of the past week.
**Overview**

This week’s format offers an extended lecture on a theological topic, possibly followed by a question and answer period, if the speaker wants to leave time for questions. Speakers and topics are decided in advance by a committee and/or the individual delegated by the core team to be in charge. Topics can range over any topics, from anything from the theology of the Trinity, to some scriptural topic, to some topic in moral theology, to practical insights into living the faith, but always with particular attention to the needs and concerns of young adults. The purpose of these lectures is to give an opening to the intellectual treasures of the Catholic tradition. While twelve lectures in the course of one year cannot provide a systematic theological education, they can give a taste of new perspectives, and inspire people to deepen their knowledge of the faith in other ways.

**Selection of speakers and topics**

The lecture topics are chosen by a committee (or the entire core team) for a six-month period. The committee brainstorms for topics and speakers. Then, after coming to some determination about the ranking – with some alternates, in case certain lectures cannot be scheduled – it is left to the Lecture Coordinator to actually schedule the lectures.

Speakers may be drawn from the parish or beyond. If the group has a budget and it is financially possible, some stipend should be offered to the speakers who come from outside the parish.

The chaplain and/or advisor should be involved in the discussion about lecture topics and speakers, as they may have important insights into pastoral considerations regarding various topics and speakers. Even if they cannot be involved in the discussion, the chaplain and/or advisor should always be consulted in some way before the group finalizes any speaker or topic.

The selection of speakers and topics is very important. There is great potential for good as well as bad. Any given speaker or topic may not greatly impact the group, but the *pattern* of speakers and topics plays an important role in shaping the group’s identity. If the speakers are well-publicized (which may or may not be desirable), then the pattern of speakers and topics will also shape the group’s public identity. For this reason great care should be taken in the scheduling of lectures.
Theological orientation

The 20s group should seek to present the teachings of the Church and the Second Vatican Council without an agenda of any kind, and speakers should manifest a similar commitment to both fidelity and pastoral sensitivity.

For those lectures addressing aspects of moral theology, it is strongly encouraged that they be virtue-centered rather than obligation-centered. Similarly, where appropriate, the call to holiness should be the central message, rather than the related but subsidiary call to avoid sin. In sum, the focus should be more on how the Christian life leads to human excellence and happiness, and less the importance of obeying commandments and laws, without of course neglecting them. Not only is this is good theology, it is particularly helpful and attractive to young adults.
Week Two: Scripture Discussion

Overview

This week’s format is a faith discussion based on a common scriptural text. Typically the Gospel of the day is discussed in small groups in response to some prepared questions.

Selection of scripture texts

Many texts would be appropriate for the discussion, and groups should feel great freedom in their selection of texts: readings may be drawn from the liturgy or perhaps gradually work through a particular book or letter.

There are advantages, however, to choosing a reading from the liturgy of the day, and especially the Gospel of the day. It connects the group with the liturgy of the universal Church. It also connects with the preceding adoration, since the priest or deacon typically reads and preaches about the Gospel of the day. Moreover, the Gospel often lends itself to discussion more than other texts, because Gospel readings are always explicitly Christ-centered, and tend to be more concrete. There are also advantages over against using the readings of the coming Sunday, since using the readings of the day ground the group in the present moment, and exposes group members to a wider range of texts then they might encounter just attending Sunday Mass.

Preparing the discussion questions

Experience shows that prepared questions are very helpful for encouraging discussion. It is helpful to have a combination of “general purpose” questions and questions that have been prepared for that evening’s reading.

The questions should direct members to discuss their faith and their experiences in the light of that day’s particular scripture passage. They should direct the conversation toward people’s own understanding of the text, and its relevance to their lives.

The discussion questions should not require any expertise in exegesis, or the historical background of the passage in question. That would shift the discussion toward “factual”
questions, and away from people’s lived experience of the faith. It would also make those less knowledgeable feel less comfortable about contributing to the discussion. Few people are experts on scripture or theology, but everybody is an expert on his or her own experiences and his or her own understanding of the faith.

For example, “What do Christ’s words in this passage mean for us today?” is more helpful than, “What is the difference between a Pharisee and a Sadducee?” The discussion may dwell on such questions, depending on people’s interests, and that can be very good, but the questions should not set out to encourage this sort of discussion.

**Small group leaders**

The small group discussions are led by volunteers from the 20s group. These volunteers put themselves “on-call” to lead discussions during weekly meetings, and then the president asks them to lead at the actual meeting, depending on who shows up. They are given a sheet with the day’s Gospel and the prepared discussion questions. The rest of the group can also be given these sheets if it is so desired.

**Introductions**

Part of the purpose of this week’s format is enable young adults to get to know each other better, and so it is important that introductions precede the discussion, assuming that it was necessary to break into smaller groups. It is helpful, for instance, to ask people to mention a high and/or low of the past week as well as their name.

**Suggested guidelines for small group leaders**

1. Begin with introductions and “highs & lows” (that is, sharing a “high” and “low” of the past week).
2. Have somebody read the Scripture passage. Ask people not to read along, but to listen to the reader.
3. Allow for a brief period of silence.
4. Go around the group and ask everybody to say what spoke to them and why. One is always free to “pass.”

5. Ask those prepared questions that seem right. Feel free to add your own.

6. Do not be afraid to allow extra silence before moving on to the next question; sometimes people take their time before contributing to the discussion. The discussion should not feel “rushed” from question to question.

7. As the time draws to a close, you may want to offer intercessions. There are many ways to do this. One way is to name a need and finish by saying, “We pray to the Lord” and the others will naturally respond “Lord, hear our prayer.” People may also want to address God or the saints directly. People should feel free to pray as long as they want, and not just to raise petitions, but to offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving as well.

8. Close with a standard prayer that everybody would know, like the “Our Father,” “Hail Mary,” or “Glory Be.” Alternatively, another prayer, especially psalms or traditional Catholic prayers, can be printed on sheets and prayed in common. You may want to introduce this common closing prayer with your own spontaneous prayer.
Week Three: Member Talk and Discussion

Overview

In the member talk format, a group member shares some personally experienced insight into the faith. Afterward there are small group discussions.

Content

A member talk communicates personal reflections on some particular topic, in the light of personal experiences and the teachings of Christ and his Church. It is neither a lecture, nor an unfocussed sharing of personal experiences.

For example, a member talk might focus on prayer; a particular sacrament; God’s providence; Christ’s teaching on forgiveness; the struggles of remaining faithful in the light of pressures or temptations; serving Christ in the poor; finding God in the community of the Church; working for justice; the communion of saints; etc. From time to time, 20s group members may feel called to speak about the story of their conversion or how they came to a deeper faith. That is certainly appropriate and to be encouraged. However, such talks should be the exception, not the rule.

Member talks can and should be personal. At the same time, speakers should be wary of sharing too much personal information. When questions arise, speakers should consult with the member talk coordinator or other core team members to ask for feedback about what would be appropriate.

N.B. Some may prefer to call these “member talks” something like “testimonies” or “witness talks.” The key point is that they are meant to focus more on the living out of the Christian life rather than a story of conversion and/or commitment to Christ. Because some people associate “testimonies” and “witness talks” with only the latter sort of talk, they are called here “member talks.”
Selection and preparation of speakers

The member talk coordinator is responsible for asking for volunteers. These volunteers may choose to speak on any theme. After a volunteer has come forward, the coordinator speaks with him or her about the content of the talk. At some point they should go over the talk together, in order to help the volunteer feel more encouraged and confident, also to address any obvious problems.

It is important that the volunteer talks to somebody before presenting the talk. This will prevent any glaring problems, and it will protect the volunteer from revealing too much, insofar as those who have not spoken about their faith in public before may reveal more than is appropriate. If the coordinator has reservations about whether a particular volunteer should address the group, the president, chaplain, and/or advisor should be consulted. Sometimes it may be necessary to ask for the volunteer to choose a different topic, or wait a while before speaking, and this should always be done with great sensitivity and gratitude for their offer.

Structure

The following is the basic structure of a member talk.

1. Brief introduction of the talk’s topic
2. Reading of some relevant passage from scripture
3. Discussion of the talk’s topic via reflections on one’s personal experiences and insights, with some attention to how they relate to the teachings of scripture and/or the Church.

After the talk, people break up into small groups and discuss.

Scripture passage

The talk should begin with a reading of a brief scripture passage chosen by the speaker. The passage is important for two reasons. First, it encourages the speaker to connect his or her talk with scripture. Second, it provides a concrete point of reference for discussion afterwards, and makes it easier to discuss the topic without feeling obligated to comment on the speaker’s talk.
**Suggested length**

Talk should aim to be 10-15 minutes long in order to leave sufficient time for discussion. The upper limit for a talk is 20 minutes, and if a speaker anticipates going this long, he or she should talk this over with the member talk coordinator beforehand.

**The discussion afterwards**

After the member talk, the group breaks for small group discussion on some prepared questions. The discussion questions should be focused on the topic and the scripture passage, but not the speaker’s talk. This avoids putting people on the spot and asking them to agree or disagree with what the speaker said. People should feel free to comment on the speaker’s presentation, while not feeling forced to do so either.

The member talk coordinator is responsible for developing the discussion questions and distributing a handout to small group discussion leaders. The speaker is welcome and encouraged to prepare discussion questions for the member talk coordinator, but the speaker may or may not want to do so, and it is ultimately the member talk coordinator’s responsibility.
Week Four: Theology Discussion

Overview

This evening provides an opportunity to discuss theology and the teachings of the faith. A text is selected from Church documents or the writings of a theologian or saint. Then the text is distributed and discussed in small groups, with the help of some prepared questions.

Content

The theology discussion is a balance of two objectives: the communication of information, and the discussion of that information. It is easy either to focus so much on communication that there is no room for discussion, or else to provide insufficient content for the discussion.

In practice, what seems to work best is to take two or three paragraphs from a text, and then discuss them with prepared questions. The most natural candidate for the text is the Catechism, but the text could be drawn from anything of theological interest.

It is helpful to keep in mind that the purpose of this evening is not so much to help people learn “facts” about theology, but to provide a context where people can together reflect on the gift of faith, and assist each other to deepen their understanding.

Selection of the theme

Groups can approach the theology discussion in different ways. The core team should discuss the different possibilities and then, after agreeing on a particular approach, delegate the theology discussion evening to a coordinator and/or committee. The format for the theology discussion may be varied from month to month, or it may follow a set theme for a certain number of months. In any case, the core team should review the format periodically, and discuss whether it needs to be tweaked or altered to meet the needs of the group.

Some ideas for selecting themes:

- Select a number of unrelated topics, find appropriate texts, and prepare discussion questions.
• Take a section of a book and work through it from month to month.
• Take a theme (e.g., the Holy Spirit) and pick different texts related to that theme for a period of months.
• Take a text from the Catechism relevant to the liturgical season or upcoming liturgical feast days.

Of course, the coordinator and/or committee may simply select a different topic and text for each month without any overall theme.

**Preparing the materials and the discussion questions**

The materials and questions are best prepared by somebody with a theological background. Failing somebody with special skills, one of the easiest things to do is simply to choose a section of the Catechism and work through it from month to month.

The questions should prompt two kinds of theological reflection. First, some questions should prompt reflection on what the text is saying about God, Jesus, the Church, and our destiny in Christ. Second, some questions should prompt reflection on the practical implications of the text in daily life.

It helps to begin with some general questions, e.g., “What are your initial thoughts on this passage?” or “Is there anything in particular about this text that strikes you or makes you think?” Then one may proceed to more specific questions about what the text is saying, and then finally move to questions about how these theological ideas have application in daily life.

**N. B.** If and when a national network of Catholics 20s groups is established, various entities, religious congregations, and ecclesial movements would be asked to prepare a series of discussion texts and questions. These would then be made available on-line. The idea would be to ask groups within the church that have particular expertise about some area to prepare appropriate materials.

This approach to preparing materials would not only provide excellent discussion materials, but it would also serve to connect young adults to various communities and diocesan offices within the larger Church, and vice versa.
Overview

Any of the four standard formats can be used for a fifth monthly meeting. However, since fifth monthly meetings happen only sporadically, they provide a convenient excuse to try something new or different.

Suggestions

The following are some suggestions for a fifth meeting:

- Movie night
- Social event
- Charismatic prayer or healing service
- Extended praise and worship
- Mass of the day
- Extended icebreakers, where a series of questions, some silly and some serious, are asked in the large group for the entire time of the meeting.
- Each member is encouraged to bring a brief text with some spiritual significance (a scripture text, a saint’s writings, a poem, etc.) and read it for the group.

20s group members should be encouraged to propose suggestions to the core team for fifth meetings, especially if they would be willing to organize it.
VI. The conclusion of the faith discussion

After the faith discussion portion of the meeting, the group assembles in the main room.

The president first invites people to make any announcements they might have, usually about other events and activities that are going on. This is an important part of the evening, as it explicitly connects the weekly meeting to the other activities of the group, and it also gives newcomers a sense of what else is going on.

After the announcements have concluded, the president leads the group in a brief prayer, including something that everybody can pray together, like an Our Father or a Hail Mary, and the group departs for a restaurant/bar/coffeehouse or has some sort of social gathering with refreshments, perhaps in the parish center.
VII. Social gathering

The final phase of the evening – some kind of social gathering – is essential to the weekly meeting. The most typical thing is to head off to a restaurant/bar/coffeehouse.

If there is space in the parish center, it is good to organize occasional gatherings at the parish center with refreshments, instead of going out.
CHAPTER 5
OTHER REGULAR MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

I. Overview

The purpose of the 20s group is to create a Christ-centered community of young adults. Therefore, like any authentic community, it requires a variety of meetings and events in order to flourish. The weekly meeting provides an anchor, but it is only one aspect of the 20s group. Other meetings and events are necessary to foster friendship, reach out to young adults who would not feel comfortable coming to the weekly meeting (at least at first), and orient the group toward direct service to others, especially the poor.

Besides the regular weekly meeting, to flourish fully, the 20s group should organize other regular meetings and regular service opportunities. It should also organize other one-time events that are social, service, and/or spiritual.

This chapter outlines various regular meetings and events that a 20s group might want to consider organizing. The specific dynamics and membership of a particular 20s group will determine which of them are most appropriate for a particular community. In all things, the core team should decide which ideas to pursue, bearing in mind the need to add different aspects to a group organically, and the need to ensure that the core team members are not overloaded.
II. Monthly Sunday Mass followed by brunch or dinner

Overview

Once a month, say on the 1st or 3rd Sunday, young adults are invited to attend a particular Sunday Mass, and then they head off to a restaurant for brunch or dinner. Alternatively the meal could be hosted in someone’s home. Evening Masses often work well since they tend to get a larger crowd of young adults anyway. Such a monthly gathering serves many purposes: it connects the group explicitly with Sunday Eucharist; it ensures that at least once a month young adults will see other young adults at the same Mass; and it provides a comfortable point of entry for newcomers.
III. Bible/Theology Study

Overview

The Bible/Theology Study offers a venue for those members interested in learning more about either scripture or theology. It meets in cycles for a few consecutive weeks on a particular topic, ideally in someone’s home. Then there is a break and a new cycle of meetings begins.

Selection of topic and materials

Those interested in organizing the Bible/Theology Study gather to discuss possible topics, which may either concern scripture or theology. Various study guides are available, and some of them are multi-media. Nonetheless, any text may serve as the basis for a particular study cycle. After the topic and materials have been selected, the group then determines a schedule of meetings, usually 3 to 6 consecutive weekly meetings. A volunteer usually offers his or her home for the duration of the study. Otherwise the group can meet on parish grounds.

Structure of the meeting

The group may want to begin with some form of prayer. The rosary is a convenient, simple prayer form that works well. It also allows people to arrive at different times without being disruptive.

The structure of the meeting itself will vary according to the topic and materials that have been chosen. For example, the group may read a scripture text, and then discuss the study materials. Or the group may listen to a CD or watch a DVD, and then discuss it. Sometimes, especially for sensitive topics, it may be helpful to break into smaller gender-based discussion groups, and then rejoin the groups for a concluding discussion.

It is important to set a firm wrap-up time for the discussion, so that those who need to leave do not feel uncomfortable leaving when they need to leave. The actual gathering, however, may continue after the formal conclusion of the meeting.

Ideally, the host and/or those attending may want to provide refreshments at some point during the meeting.
IV. Monthly Social Event

Overview

The 20s group strives to create community and foster friendship, and this objective requires a variety of social events in different contexts. A social coordinator, ideally assisted by a committee, oversees the planning of at least one social event per month. Others within the group may well organize other social events during the course of any given month, and hopefully they will, but the idea is that each month the 20s group offers at least one “official” social event.

Planning and suggestions

The monthly event can be anything from a cookout to a baseball game to the social aspect of a spiritual gathering (e.g., a reception or party that accompanies a special liturgy or Mass). Here are some ideas that have worked well:

- Game nights
- Texas Hold ‘Em poker tournament
- Paintball
- Corn maze
- Karaoke
- Beer-making or beer-tasting with monastic beer (i.e., beer made by monks)
- July 4th cookout and fireworks
- Super Bowl Party
- Christmas or Epiphany Party with “white elephant” re-gifting gift exchange
- Movie night
• New Member night – a social gathering especially for new members to help them feel more welcome

• Bowling

• Trip to the beach

• Iron Chef style cook-off

• Semi-formal progressive dinner, charging more than needed for food to raise money for some charity
V. Service Outreach

Overview

Service should be an important element of any 20s group. Service is not only intrinsic to the Christian life, and so the responsibility of any Christian community; it also provides an important source of spiritual vitality and joy that ultimately feeds back into the 20s group.

Organizing the group’s service outreach

In organizing the group’s service outreach, the service coordinator and the service committee should first inquire to discover what forms of outreach are already going on, especially in the parish, but also in the diocese as a whole. There may be some needs that have already been identified, and which the parish and diocese would warmly welcome the assistance of young adults. In general, a certain preference for inter-generational collaboration is desirable. Such collaboration benefits both young adults and older parishioners: it gives young adults an opportunity to learn from older parishioners and become more grounded in the local church community, and older parishioners become encouraged and inspired by the faith and energy of the young adults.

In deciding upon collective forms of service, another consideration is the commitment and numbers required by a particular ministry. For example, if the group commits to providing meals at a homeless shelter once a month, then a certain number of people must show up or people will go hungry. Regular visits to nursing home residents, however, do not have disastrous consequences if people do not show up. Such factors should be weighed along with the interests and availability of group members.

Practically speaking, the best way to organize the group’s service outreach is through a combination of low-key, regular service that might attract fewer people, and periodic large-scale events on a quarterly basis that require and attract a larger number of people. This ensures that service outreach is a constant dimension of the group’s activities, without extending members beyond their availability and energy.

Individual forms of parish service should be encouraged, even if not done as a group, such serving as Eucharistic ministers and lectors. This cultivates the group’s connection with the
concrete life of the parish. It also raises its visibility in the parish, which will both draw other young adults to the parish and the group, and encourage older parishioners.

**Some ideas for regular service outreach**

The following are some suggestions for regular, low-key forms of service that could be organized as a form of collective outreach:

- Volunteering with parish youth group
- Visiting nursing home residents
- Teaching Religious Education classes in the parish in teams
- Some form of ministry to the homeless (e.g., monthly preparation of sandwiches)
- Advocacy for the needs of a local group (e.g., immigrants)
- Environmental service (e.g., cleaning part of road, maintaining public grounds)
- Contacting the diocese and making group members available to speak at schools and youth retreats about faith
- Participating in area pro-life prayer vigil or rosary walk
- Volunteering with area pregnancy center

**Some ideas for one-time service events**

The following are some suggestions for one-time service events, some of which could be done annually:

- Volunteering to help with annual parish festival
- Housework or yardwork for elderly parishioner identified by the pastor
- Day-long Habitat for Humanity project
- Singing Christmas carols at area nursing homes
• Spring or summer mission trip

• Participating in a public protest for a worthy cause, such as the March for Life in January in Washington, D.C.
VI. Sports and Outdoor Activities

Overview
The spectrum of the group’s activities should include sports and outdoor activities. They provide a natural outlet for the energy and interests of many 20-somethings. They also provide a non-threatening point of entry for young adults, especially those who are non-Catholic, or who are Catholic but uncomfortable about participating in the more explicitly religious meetings. Moreover, hiking and camping trips provide an encounter with the beauty of God’s creation, which has its own spiritual effect regardless of the explicit motivation behind the activity.

Sports
Some combination of regular and sporadic events is ideal. Softball, kickball, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball, and similar sports are particularly suited to a 20s group because men and women feel more comfortable playing such sports together, and because they do not require a huge amount of skill. Runners and cyclists can also organize regular runs or cycling. The group may also want to enter a team in a local sporting league. Whatever is done, it is important that the activity be regular and (ideally) weekly, so that people always know that there will be something going on at a certain time and place. Weekend afternoons work particularly well, and lend themselves to impromptu social gatherings afterwards in the evening.

Outdoor activities
Outdoor activities require more planning, and therefore tend to be intermittent and require organizer(s) to take charge of planning. A combination of day trips and overnight trips works best, so that those less familiar with hiking and camping can ease their way into new experiences. White water rafting trips can work very well too. The group may want to offer one big annual outing each summer, like a weekend camping trip in a nearby state park.
VII. Annual Retreat

Overview

Every year the group should sponsor some kind of annual retreat. There are a variety of formats that can be chosen. Depending on its needs and resources, the group may want to design its own retreat, or attend something offered by a monastery or retreat center.

Planning the retreat

There are many possible approaches to an annual retreat. The first step is to decide whether to attend a retreat offered by another church community, or to plan a retreat only for group members. There are advantages to each approach: the former connects the group to others, and the latter builds internal community spirit. Then the actual format of the retreat itself and its location should be decided. The chaplain and/or the advisor should be involved in these discussions, as they may well have many insights and suggestions, and in any case they may need to play a special role in the actual retreat. The winter is often a good time to schedule a retreat, because there is not as much competition with other event planning.

Resources

Some resources deserve special note.

- Charis Ministries, based in Chicago, has developed a retreat program based on Ignatian spirituality particularly for young adults. It organizes retreats and also offers planning materials for those organizing their own retreats.

- Local monasteries are a great resource for retreats. Many are particularly geared to hosting retreatants and may be able accommodate a group of young adults. A simple weekend schedule that involves joining the monastic community for prayers and Mass, perhaps supplemented by the group’s own lectio divina, rosary, and/or Eucharistic adoration, can provide the backbone of a low-maintenance but nonetheless spiritually graced weekend. One of the monks or nuns may be available to give two or three talks,
and perhaps with time for group discussion and a social gathering on Saturday night, a full and satisfying weekend is fairly easy to plan.

**Young adult conferences**

Young adult conferences are different from retreats, and should not be seen as a substitute for them. Nonetheless, conferences provide an important avenue for a group to connect with the wider young adult community. Dioceses often sponsor young adult conferences for a day or weekend. If the group’s diocese does not offer one, the diocesan offices might be able to suggest a nearby diocese that does. The Franciscan University of Steubenville also offers one of the largest young adult conferences in the United States every summer. It attracts young adults mainly from the Midwest but from the rest of the country as well.
VIII. Other Spiritual Events

Overview

Periodic spiritual events, often tied to the church’s liturgical year, contribute in significant ways to the life of the 20s group. They are often most successful when they are combined with a social element.

Some ideas and suggestions

Here are some suggestions for occasional or annual events of a spiritual nature. The appendix includes a more detailed description of some of them.

- Opportunity for confession during weekly meeting’s adoration 2-4 times per year
- Occasional Mass during a weekly meeting, either instead of adoration, or immediately afterwards
- New Year’s Eve Midnight Mass, perhaps preceded by some time for Eucharistic adoration beforehand. It can be preceded or followed by a party, either at a member’s house, or at the parish center.
- Attendance as a group at local Theology on Tap meetings, perhaps cancelling normal weekly meetings if they are on the same night as Theology on Tap. Attendance at Theology on Tap is a great way to network with other young adults.
- Vigil of the Saints on October 31: This liturgy involves readings from saints or saints’ biographies in a darkened church, followed by a homily, Night Prayer and a candle-lit procession and chanting of a Litany of Saints. Afterwards there is a reception. This liturgy was developed in Washington, DC, at the Dominican House of Studies, where it is particularly popular with young adults, and has attracted national attention.
- Extended Pentecost Vigil Celebration: For the early Christians, the Vigil of Pentecost was one of the most important celebrations of the year. There is still an extended version of the Vigil Mass “on the books” that is rarely used, dedicated to praying for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The positive theme of hope and renewal and new life is a natural fit for a young adult group, and a day-long celebration can be built around the
Pentecost Vigil Mass. In the afternoon, there can be outdoor games, small group faith discussions, a grill-out, and then some time of prayer before Mass. The prayer before Mass can include Eucharistic adoration, First Vespers of Pentecost, praying of the 3rd glorious mystery of the rosary (i.e., the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost), and opportunity for confession. The readings and prayers for the extended vigil of Pentecost are available in liturgical books. After the Mass, there should be an extended party. The celebration also provides a natural occasion to host a meeting of representatives from different area young adult groups, to network and exchange ideas.

- Pilgrimage road-trip: Pilgrimages are a great experience for a group, but they are often too expensive for young adults. There are places, however, that are accessible by car. Carpooling and camping can significantly minimize expenses. In the United States, there are particularly notable shrines in Auriesville, NY, and the Washington, DC, area. In Canada there is the martyrs’ shrine in Midland, Ontario, and many shrines in Montreal, Trois-Rivieres, and Quebec City. In Mexico there is the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. There are also many other lesser-known shrines or monasteries in different parts of the country that could serve as the focal point of a road trip pilgrimage.
IX. Other ideas for regular meetings and activities

Overview
The group should make it clear that anybody who wants to start a new activity is always welcome to give it a try. Such ideas should be discussed at a core team meeting to inform and incorporate the feedback of other members before starting. Nonetheless, the presumption should be that, unless there would be a direct conflict with some other dimension of the group’s activities, those who have the energy and inspiration for something new should be encouraged to try and get something going.

Suggestions
Here is a list of some ideas that may prove attractive to young adults.

- Book club where members meet to discuss books or novels of whatever sort, religious or non-religious
- Intercessory prayer group where members are part of an email group and pray for petitions sent to the group; the group may also meet to pray together
- Charismatic prayer group
- Women’s group
- Men’s group
- Foreign movie club where members watch foreign movies and discuss them
CHAPTER 6

COMMUNICATION, PUBLICITY AND NETWORKING

I. Overview

Communication, publicity and networking are essential elements of a thriving 20s group, and they deserve special attention from the core team. This chapter offers some suggestions for internal and external communication.

II. Website

Every 20s group needs its own website. The parish may have space for the group on its website, or it may be necessary to acquire a new domain. The website will be a primary point of reference for the group, especially in order to attract new members. It is helpful if the website is updated frequently, e.g., with pictures, upcoming events, etc. The website can also be a convenient place to make flyers or other resources available for download.

Nonetheless, email seems to be the best way to communicate with group members. It can be difficult for a webmaster to keep a website updated, and in any case group members are unlikely to check the website regularly just in case there are updates.

Therefore, the website should be seen primarily as a form of publicity and a depot for various resources. It is not an effective way to communicate within the group.

III. Group emails

Email is the most important form of communication within the group. Websites like Yahoo! offer free group services that allow members to email the entire group without having to enter individual emails. The group should register for two group email accounts: one for the group at large and one for the core team.
**Weekly emails**

Every week, the president or somebody delegated by the president should send out an email to the group, with information about that week’s main meeting, along with any other meetings and events going on that week and in the near future. Group members can also send other announcements to the president to be included in this weekly email.

Those responsible for certain meetings and events – like the weekly Bible Study or a game of ultimate Frisbee – may want to send out reminder emails with more detailed information.

**Group email policy**

Generally, it works best to allow everybody to email the group directly, rather than have every email first cleared by someone in charge of the email list. For instance, somebody might want to organize a social gathering or a movie at the last minute. Similarly, somebody might want to send out something inspirational or humorous. From time to time, people may cause problems with inappropriate or overly frequent emails. In most cases, these problems can be addressed by simply taking it up with the individual, but if necessary the core team may want to restrict an individual’s ability to email to the group. Generally speaking, it is good to ask members not to debate controversial issues through the group email. Individual groups may want to lay down other ground rules for the emails. Some group members may prefer not to receive frequent emails, and most group email services allow individual members to limit the amount of emails they receive (e.g., they can request through the email service to receive fewer emails, so that all of the emails sent out in a given day or week are compiled into one email).

**Member list**

It is a good idea to compile a list of members’ addresses and phone numbers so that they can be reached directly. The list can then be made available through the group email service to other group members. Members should always be asked, however, whether they want to share their personal information with the rest of the group.
IV. Getting the word out

The group should be consciously dedicated to attracting new members for multiple reasons. The rule “the more the merrier” applies especially to young adults. It also ensures that there are new faces to replace those who drop out or move away. Moreover, encouraging someone to participate in the group’s activities may also help the individual to draw closer to Christ and his Church.

Beyond these obvious considerations, an orientation toward attracting and welcoming new members has a subtle but very important effect on the atmosphere of the group. Having such a focus prevents the group from forming cliques and turning inward. People naturally start thinking in terms of welcoming newcomers, and being open to others rather than just their own needs. In any case, even without being encouraged to do so, if the group is thriving, people will naturally invite friends, because they are having such a good time, and they want others to experience it, too.

Parish bulletins

The 20s group should put frequent announcements in the parish bulletin. Although many young adults do not read the bulletin, parents and relatives may notice something, and then encourage young adults they know to attend. It is also encouraging for parishioners to see that young adults are doing something in the parish. Announcements should also be sent to neighboring parishes for their bulletins, at least periodically.

Pulpit announcements

One of the most effective ways to invite new members to the group is to have members make brief announcements during Mass, and then stay around afterwards to talk to parishioners. Even if there are not many young adults at a particular Mass, others who are attending may know a 20-something, who then they might encourage to look into the 20s group. Group members may also speak to pastors at neighboring parishes and ask to speak in their parishes as well. It is good to time these invitations at Mass with an upcoming special event that it might be easier for a newcomer to attend (e.g., a volleyball game or a cook-out).
V. Networking

Connecting with other parishes

The 20s group may find that other area parishes are very interested in supporting its ministry. Many of them may not have the resources to support their own young adult ministry, but would be happy to direct their young adults to a nearby 20s group.

Connecting with campus ministries

It can be very helpful for the 20s group to connect with local campus ministries. This has multiple potential benefits. Not only do such connections attract new members, but the witness of 20-somethings living their faith can be encouraging and inspiring to college students, and give them a vision of life after college. It also may inspire out-of-state college students to establish a 20s group in their home parishes after they graduate.

Connecting with the diocese

It is very important for a 20s group to connect with the person(s) in charge of young adult ministry for the diocese. The diocese may be able to provide helpful guidance, suggestions, and resources. It may also have a list of young adult groups which can be useful for networking.

Connecting with other young adult groups

Young adults enjoy meeting new people and connecting with other groups besides their own. These sorts of connections can be fostered in a number of different ways. Multiple groups can co-sponsor the same event (such as a Theology on Tap series), join in the same trip, attend the same young adult conference together, etc. They may also want to send representatives of their respective leadership teams to meet and discuss how they go about things, and what works and what doesn’t, and in this way exchange ideas and encourage each other. But regardless of what form collaboration might take, the key thing is to open the lines of communication and develop friendships and relationships. The rest will happen naturally and organically.
CHAPTER 7

STARTING A 20S GROUP

I. Overview

The manual thus far has given a vision of what a fully established 20s group might look like. Starting a 20s group from scratch is complex and challenging, and it requires flexibility and a willingness to try things that might not work. Moreover, the model presented in this manual may not be appropriate for every situation. This chapter will make some suggestions for how to go about starting a 20s group, and how to adapt this model of ministry to particular circumstances. These suggestions should be seen for what they are — suggestions — and each group experiment and try what seems right to them.

II. Pray!

The first and most important step is to pray for God’s help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And don’t just pray, ask other people to pray. If there are local religious communities, call them up and ask them to pray for this intention. Ask pastors to see if there are ways that this intention can be incorporated into the prayers of the parish. Parishioners may be interested in gathering for a special time of prayer for young adults: older parishioners are often very concerned about younger Catholics and may be very pleased to be asked to pray for this intention. It may also be possible to add petitions to the intercessions during Sunday Mass. Christ assures us that this prayer will bear fruit: “Amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.” (Mt 18:19) He also guarantees that the Holy Spirit will be given to all who ask: “If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Lk 11:13) Any time given to prayer for God’s help in the founding of a 20s group will always prove well worth it.
III. Concrete Steps

1. Find a home-base parish

Find a parish to sponsor and support the 20s group. The group will require some assistance from a priest or deacon, so the availability of a priest or deacon for this ministry is an important consideration. Other important considerations include the meeting facilities of the parish and the concentration of young adults living in the parish or nearby environs.

Some groups may be sponsored by multiple parishes working together as a team. Nonetheless, it seems advisable to have the weekly meeting at the same parish every week to avoid confusion. It also grounds the group more concretely in the life of the church, and helps the group to see itself as part of parish life, and not just renting space at different churches. It can be beneficial for other sponsoring parishes to host other events and regular meetings, however. (For more on the topic of regional 20s groups, see Chapter 8.)

2. Find interested young adults

Find a core group of young adults interested in starting a 20s group. Ten seems to be a good threshold number. (It also constitutes a minyan, the minimum number traditionally required for Jewish public prayer.) If there are fewer than ten young adults who are nonetheless committed to making something happen, the best way forward may be to pray together for this intention, perhaps before the Blessed Sacrament, and spend time together getting to know each other better, perhaps with discussions of one kind or another—and then just wait to see if God ends up sending other people their way. If the group remains smaller than ten, these young adults may want to try something else, perhaps a small informal bible study, or together attend an existing parish group that while not exclusively for young adults seems appropriate for them.

3. Advertise for an organizational meeting

Before holding any formal meetings, hold an organizational meeting, and advertise it through parish bulletins, pulpit announcements, diocesan newsletters, etc., and ask those young adults who have already expressed interest to invite their friends.
At this meeting, a vision of what a 20s group is about should be presented and discussed. Those present should discuss their views about what their 20s group should be about, and then try to move toward a consensus about how to proceed.

Whatever else is discussed and decided at this meeting, it is important for those in attendance to ratify the basic 20s group model. It may turn out, for example, that those gathered do not think that the model presented in this manual is right for their circumstances. They might prefer to proceed according to a different model, and indeed that might be better for them. In any case, it is crucial that whatever is decided reflect the interests of the young adults who are actually gathered for this organizational meeting.

The group may want to have a special gathering to kick off the group’s establishment – perhaps a cookout or a special Mass and dinner – or it may want to begin with the standard weekly meeting. In any case, at this organizational meeting, it will be important to set a night and a time for the regular weekly meeting. Various individuals will need to take responsibility for preparing whatever is decided.

4. Establish a core team

An open invitation should be extended to those interested in forming the initial core team. Volunteers may be elicited before, after, or during the initial organizational meeting. Volunteers should be asked to commit to a set period of time, something like six months. There may be rough spots as the group is trying to get started, but after six months, the core team should have a good sense of whether or not the group will be able to sustain itself. It may be that it can’t, in which case there is no harm in acknowledging that fact, and perhaps disbanding or trying something else.

Until the group has time to settle down and get its bearings, it may best for people to volunteer for different organizational responsibilities on an ad hoc basis, without assigning distinct roles. Or people may prefer to take on positions right from the beginning. In any case, once the core team feels like things have settled sufficiently, or as soon as growing numbers make it necessary, a president should be appointed for one year, and other core team positions formally taken up for one year.
5. **Discuss and put in writing descriptions of the group’s mission, the core team’s organization, and basic group policies**

The core team should discuss and put in writing the group’s purpose, organization, and policies. Such discussions will clarify the nature and purpose of the group, heighten the core team’s sense of ownership, and prevent miscommunication. It is important that the core team’s decisions be put into writing for future reference. They should also be made available to the rest of the group. Much of it, but perhaps not all, should be posted on the group’s website.

The best timing for such discussions may vary. Some may want to operate according to provisional guidelines, and then formally address these issues once the group has come into its own rhythm, and the core team is up and running. Others may want to figure things out from the very beginning. In either case, the core team may find it helpful to conduct these discussions in the context of a planning retreat.

6. **Begin the weekly meeting**

The most important element to get started is the weekly meeting. It may be the case that there are no musicians able to provide contemporary music during adoration. If so, the group should decide whether to meet for quiet adoration or wait until a musician can be recruited. For the faith discussion portion of the evening, the group may want to use only those formats that it finds easier to prepare (e.g., the Scripture Discussion format). Once things have settled down, and more volunteers come forward to help with the preparation work, other formats can be added to the rotation.

7. **Advertise widely**

Once the group has started to meet regularly, it is important to flood all relevant channels with publicity and advertisements (see Chapter 6 for more suggestions). In this beginning stage, it is important to build up a critical mass of young adults as soon as possible. Ask group members to spread the word with family and friends.
8. Gradually add other elements

As things grow and develop, the core team will naturally want to expand the activities of the group or refine how it goes about things. It should gradually add elements to the life of the group, drawn from either the suggestions in this manual, or any new ideas that seem promising to the core team. In any event, the core team should not feel hurried, but should proceed organically. Hopefully as the group grows, the core team will as well, and this will provide new volunteers to organize new events without overworking any particular individual. In the initial stages of establishing a 20s group, the core team should make special effort to proceed by consensus and guard internal unity, so that everybody feels good about how things are progressing.
CHAPTER 8

REGIONAL 20S GROUPS AND DIOCESAN ORGANIZATIONS

I. Overview

This chapter will discuss two separate issues: how to adopt the standard 20s group parish-based model for regional groups, and how to set up regional and diocesan structures for organizing multiple 20s groups in the same diocese.

II. Regional 20s Groups

The most natural model for a 20s group is a parish-based structure. However, while all 20s groups by their nature tend to attract young adults from multiple parishes, in certain circumstances it may be preferable to have a regional group that is explicitly organized as the common project of multiple parishes, or perhaps a diocesan deanery.

The basic elements of the standard 20s group model themselves can be retained easily in a regional group. The question is how to go about dividing these elements among the different parishes and/or other Catholic institutions that are sponsoring this regional group. The central challenge of the regional group, then, is figuring out a way, in very particular circumstance, of how to involve multiple parishes in the regular activities of the 20s group, rather than centering everything at one parish.

The most important decision is when and where to hold the main weekly meeting. The main weekly meeting is the anchor of the 20s group model. As such, the vitality of the group depends greatly on its success. From the perspective of the core team, it is easier if it is at the same place every week, because it minimizes hassles in making the necessary day-to-day ordinary preparations for adoration, arranging the meeting space, etc., and thus keeps the weekly meetings low-maintenance. From the perspective of the 20s group at large, it is also better if it is held at the same place: the stability and regularity foster community. Consequently, the importance of having the weekly meeting at the same place every week far outweighs the benefits of involving multiple parishes in hosting it on a rotating schedule.

In selecting the parish to host the weekly meeting, considerations include location, church facilities, especially meeting rooms for the discussion, availability of a priest or deacon, and...
parking. All other things being equal, it is particularly important that the parish be centrally located and have adequate meeting space. It is also preferable to select a parish with a vibrant community and many young adults among its members: such vitality will help the 20s group attract new members for its main weekly meeting, especially when it is first getting off the ground.

Other regular meetings should be held at other parishes and other locations, especially those locations where a substantial number of group members either live or attend Mass. In this way, the different Catholic entities sponsoring the 20s group are involved as much as possible in its actual activities.

For example, Parish A might have a central location, a priest or deacon available for adoration on a regular basis, and adequate meeting rooms, so it might be the obvious choice for the main weekly meeting. Meanwhile, Parish B has an excellent parish center with many meeting rooms, and perhaps it could host a bible or theology study. Parish C has a well-developed community service program or social justice outreach where members could volunteer on a regular basis. Parish D has a parish school and a gym and playing fields where there could be a weekly softball/basketball/ultimate Frisbee game. Parish E might have a thriving men’s or women’s group that young adults might attend together, and Parish F might have a charismatic prayer group. Parish G might have a youth group that could use some young adult volunteers or a religious education program that needs teachers, and group members could serve these needs as a team rather than as just individuals. Members might meet at Coffeehouse A for a monthly book club discussion.

Whatever is decided, it tends to work better when the same parish always hosts the same event, rather than having them rotate between different parishes. The regularity builds stability, and the stability builds community. However, the regularity of location is not as important for these other meetings as with it is the main weekly meeting.

There is also a lot of room for hosting special events at different parishes. For example, an annual volleyball game might be held at a different parish every year. One-time social events, service events, spiritual events, retreats, and other gatherings can be deliberately scheduled for different parishes. Not only does this involve more parishes, it also allows the group to make itself better known in the area of the host parish. So, for example, the parish hosting a certain event should not only to advertise the event among its parishioners, but also to take the opportunity publicize the regional 20s group in general, which may have a low profile in the parish if a regular meeting is not hosted there. In this way, special events can become
opportunities for publicity and for the young adults of a given parish to meet the regional 20s group on their own turf.

One especially easy way to integrate multiple parishes in a rotating event is a monthly Sunday Mass, followed by brunch or dinner, with the Mass hosted by a different parish every month. This rotating Mass and brunch/dinner by its nature involves many different parishes in a natural way. Moreover, it provides a natural way to publicize the group: at the Mass the young adults attend, the priest makes a special announcement welcoming the group. In the announcement, the priest can also invite young adults present in the congregation to talk to representatives of the 20s group after Mass – the 20s group could have a couple representatives standing at the doors of the church as people exit – and/or join them for the brunch or dinner. Parishes and Masses with a large young adult attendance should be given preferential treatment in the rotating schedule, in order to reach as many young adults as possible. Evening Masses often work especially well, because they tend to attract a large number of young adults, as the timing often makes it easier for young adults to attend.

For regional 20s groups, good email coordination is particularly important. Because the meetings and events are held over a wide geographical area, special effort will be necessary to make it very clear where different meetings are held. Moreover, it will be especially important to collect email addresses from young adults who attend any of the meetings, so that they can receive updates.

Above all, given the special difficulties associated with splitting up the group’s meetings and events among multiple parishes, it is essential that the 20s group core team have a strong hand in deciding the locations of the actual meetings and events. Regional groups have to wrestle with two practical questions: that is, how to maximize the attendance of young adults, and how to maximize the participation of members from all sponsoring parishes and institutions. Because young adults generally have the best sense of how questions of locations and rotations will relate to the schedules of their peers, the core team plays an especially critical role in discerning how to answer these questions in the most pastorally effective way.

Due to the special challenges of regional groups, the core team needs to be especially open to experimentation, and especially attentive to evaluating the success of various experiments. After implementing a new idea, the core team should discuss the results after 1-3 months so that adjustments can be made if necessary. The core team may need to experiment with a variety of rotational schemes before they arrive at a solution that fits the needs of the regional group’s particular situation. At the annual review meeting, the core team should give special attention to reviewing how the system of rotation among the different locations is working.
Coordination between multiple 20s groups in the same region

When there are multiple 20s groups in the same region or city, periodic gatherings can be helpful. The coordination can range from collaboration on annual events or retreats to something more regular.

One option for regular collaboration is to have a monthly gathering with the basic structure of the main weekly meeting at some central location, perhaps the cathedral of the diocese. The meeting starts with adoration and music, and then leads to some sort of gathering and discussion afterwards. Sometimes it might be preferable to have an extended talk of some sort. The fact that multiple groups are collaborating may make it possible to bring in an especially noted speaker, for example. However, the focus of these regular meetings should not be on arranging events where young adults are passively listening to a speaker. The main purpose of these regional gatherings is to foster community among different groups, and to allow young adults to make new connections and new friendships. One of the more natural formats for these meetings is the member talk format, where a young adult gives a brief talk drawing upon a personal insight into the faith, and then those attending break up into small group discussions. Afterwards, there might be a social gathering at the place of the gathering, or the group might go to a coffee house, bar or restaurant.

The core teams of the different 20s groups would be involved in planning and organizing these regional gatherings, perhaps on a rotating basis.

III. Diocesan organizational structures

Dioceses may want to organize a core team of young adults in order to coordinate events that serve the entire diocese. The purpose of a diocesan core team is to serve young adults on the diocesan level in a way is not possible for individual 20s groups, or even regional clusters of 20s groups. It aims not to replace the activities and ministry of individual 20s groups, but to supplement them.

Overview

As with any local 20s group core team, the diocesan core team is free to set its own agenda (subject to the oversight of a diocesan representative).
The diocesan core team might plan events like:

- Diocesan young adult pilgrimages or retreats
- Theology on Tap programs
- Diocesan mission trips, e.g., Habitat for Humanity
- Lenten days of recollection
- Annual young adult picnic
- Annual young adult Pentecost Vigil
- Annual young adult day-long conference

The diocesan core team might also undertake projects to build community among young adults such as:

- Coordinating a diocesan young adult website
- Constructing an email directory of young adults
- Providing information to parishes to help them become more young adult friendly

The membership of the diocesan core team might or might not actually undertake the organization of these events and projects themselves. More likely, after they have made decisions about what events and projects they would like to undertake, they will find it helpful to advertise for volunteers among the local 20s groups, or to delegate an event or project to one particular 20s group. For example, it might be decided to have an annual young adult picnic. One particular 20s group might want to host it every year – perhaps they have especially nice parish grounds – or each year a different 20s group could volunteer to host the picnic.
Membership of the diocesan core team

The membership of this core team would be as follows:

- Official representative from the diocese
- Presidents of local 20s groups
- Representatives from local 20s groups
- Other young adults
- Other pastoral ministers

The diocesan core team runs very similarly to the core team of an individual core team and places the same priority on consensus decision-making. Oversight is provided by the diocesan representative, who has veto power over the deliberations of the core team. The representative ideally attends the meetings of the core teams, but if that is not possible, he or she can be given minutes of the meeting, and in this way can stay in the loop and intervene when necessary.

Unlike the membership of the core team of a local 20s group, the membership of the diocesan core team is not open to just any young adult who wants to help. The representatives sent from local 20s group should in some way be recommended by their own core teams and/or their chaplains or directors. This requirement helps guarantee that the diocesan core team truly represents the lived reality of the various local 20s groups.

Presidents of 20s group would *ex officio* be members of the diocesan core team, but they may not want to be very involved in its actual meetings and work, given their other responsibilities. Nonetheless, by making them *ex officio* members, they have the option of being involved, even if many never even attend a diocesan core team meeting. The bulk of the energy on the diocesan core team most likely will come from the representatives of various local groups who do not have as many other responsibilities in their own local group.

There also should be room for other young adults to be involved, at the discretion of the diocesan representative. For example, there may be some young adults working in parishes in some ministerial capacity, perhaps as youth ministers, who would have exceptional gifts and abilities to contribute, but might not be involved in a 20s group themselves. Nonetheless, they could contribute much to the discussions of the diocesan core team, and may have a particular talent in planning diocesan-wide young adult events. However, the clear majority of the
members of the diocesan core team should be involved in local 20s groups, to ensure that the concerns of local groups are adequately represented in its planning and discussions.

The diocesan core team should aim to meet less frequently than that of a local core team, in order to avoid taking its members away from their local communities. However, since most of the actual organizational work of the diocesan core team is delegated to volunteers, those working on a particular project will want to meet frequently to work on the actual event or project.
CHAPTER 9

ADAPTING THIS MODEL OF MINISTRY TO PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES

I. Overview

As it stands, the model of ministry described in this manual may not be appropriate for some particular situations. Those involved in establishing a group, therefore, should always feel free to adapt the model proposed here. At the same time, those involved in developing this model cannot vouch for the viability of certain adaptations. For this reason, great care and caution should be exercised with such adaptations. This chapter hopes to assist those groups discerning how to go about adapting the 20s group model for their particular situation. It will discuss some common reasons a group might want to adapt it, discuss the pros and cons of such modifications, and then offer some suggestions for how to proceed.

II. Chaplains and advisors

The 20s group model ideally involves a priest chaplain who participates in the discussions of the core team, oversees the weekly adoration, occasionally makes himself available for confession to the group, and is generally present at 20s group events. He is also a liaison to other clergy and so coordinates the involvement of other priests and deacons in the group’s ministry. However, many priests will not have the time to be so involved in the 20s group. In these situations, some sacramental ministry may be provided by a deacon. A lay person or religious may serve as an advisor to the group by being present during 20s group activities, and filling in for the chaplain at core team discussions.

Nonetheless, it is important that every 20s group have a priest chaplain, even if he is very rarely involved in 20s group decisions or activities. There are two reasons. First, occasionally the 20s group will absolutely need a priest, and so it needs a go-to priest assigned to the group. Second, the 20s group is supported by a particular parish, and consequently it is important that the pastor has some oversight over its activities. Generally speaking, this simply means that the pastor has veto power over any plans that the pastor thinks might have negative pastoral implications. In practice, such veto power is generally delegated to the deacon or advisor who is more involved in day to day affairs. The veto power generally is very rarely necessary to exercise.
If a lay person serves as the advisor to a group, it seems crucial that the advisor be significantly older than the members of the group. Otherwise, the advisor’s delegated authority from the pastor could create all kinds of tension on a personal level. For example, some parishes may have a young adult serving as youth minister, who is also asked to oversee young adult ministry in the parish. In this case, it does not seem advisable for this young adult to serve as the group’s advisor: because he or she would be a peer to the rest of the core team, or perhaps even younger than many other core team members, the exercise of any oversight would cause unavoidable tension.

When the priest chaplain is not available for much day-to-day involvement, and no deacon or lay person is available, the core team should simply proceed without much involvement from a chaplain or advisor. However, in such circumstances, the core team should submit the minutes of its meetings to the pastor as a courtesy, and to keep him informed. That way, if the pastor has any concerns he can speak to the core team. If the core team is considering anything that might have a significant impact on the parish or the 20s group, they should contact the pastor to discuss it with him.

III. Adapting the model for a campus ministry

The model proposed in this manual is geared to creating a community of young adults within the context of a typical parish. A campus ministry can use this model in two ways. First, if a campus ministry program is already established, then it already has what the model is designed to generate: a community of young adults united in their faith. There is not a need for all of the elements of the 20s group model. In such situations, the weekly meeting format of the 20s group model could add to the campus ministry’s existing programs. It is very appropriate to a campus ministry, and it has been very effective in helping to build Christ-centered community among college students in campus ministry settings. Second, if a campus ministry program has not yet been established on a campus, it could be implemented as the core of the campus ministry’s extra-liturgical programming.

IV. Shortening the weekly meeting

The weekly meeting lasts for a good three hours: an hour for adoration; an hour and a quarter for the faith discussion (including moving over form the church, getting settled, making announcements, etc.); and then however long people socialize afterwards. In a parish setting
where most members are working, this works well. However, it may be preferable to shorten the weekly meeting in some situations, if people are busier and have less time for the weekly meeting, or if people are more immersed in a community of their peers (as in a campus ministry situation) and so have more opportunities for socializing apart from the group. The easiest way to shorten the meeting is to shorten the period of adoration. The next easiest is to have less time allocated for small group discussions. An open-ended social gathering, though, should almost always be proposed afterwards, even if only a few young adults decide to go somewhere.

V. Making do without musicians for adoration

It might happen that there are a good number of young adults who would like to start a 20s group, but they do not have a musician who can play guitar or keyboard among their number. What should be done? It is inadvisable to give up on having adoration with contemporary music. In the experience of those who have developed this model, this element plays a crucial role in its success. For example, some have experienced dramatic growth after adoration with contemporary music was added to a group’s meeting format. Other models of ministry might well thrive without music and adoration, but the model proposed here requires it.

Nonetheless, there might be ways around a shortage of musicians. First, it might be possible to find a musician once or twice a month. That may be enough to get things going, and on the other weeks just holding adoration without music. If the group grows, it is almost inevitable that some young adult will come forward who knows how to play the guitar. Second, if no volunteer is available, the parish can simply supply the funds and hire a musician. Third, if enough young adults are especially competent singers, and there are not that many people in attendance, it may be possible to sing praise and worship music a cappella – but this should only be done if it can be pulled off tastefully, as it could end up worse than silence.

VI. Ministering to a different age demographic

A particular parish may want to use this model to minister to different demographic of young adults, perhaps 18-35, 18-39, or 30-39. However, there are a number of very serious concerns to consider. First, the 20s group model proposed here requires a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. Young adults past their early 30s are generally in different state of mind: they have matured and are more established, and their interests are different. Consequently, the model
proposed here is not necessarily appropriate for an older age group. Second, there is a huge difference between somebody who is 18 and somebody who is 39 or even 35. While 18-35 can work as a demographic block, if those in their thirties are in the minority, 18-39 almost inevitably drifts older and alienates those who are younger. Third, one of the advantages of this model is its name: “20s group” tells people its target demographic in two words. As such it becomes instantly more attractive to people in their 20s. Once the age demographic extends to mid-30s, such a name can no longer be used, and much is lost in the process. It is helpful to keep in mind that people often assume that “young adult groups” are for teenagers. Even for those used to church lingo, it is necessary to check a group’s materials to see what age demographic a particular “young adult group” targets.

So, in summary, great caution must be exercised in adapting the demographic. One possible solution is to create a 30s group that operates parallel to a 20s group, where members of each group attend the weekly adoration but then meet separately. Nonetheless, experience has shown that such 30s groups seem to attract fewer members then groups whose members are primarily in their 20s.

VII. Naming the group and the different meetings

The names of the meetings in this manual are deliberately bland and straightforward so that their titles directly convey what they are about. Groups may or may not want to modify them to suit their purposes. For example, if the weekly meeting is on a Thursday, it might be preferable to just call it the Thursday night meeting. Similarly the group may prefer to give different names to the various core team positions.

However, the core team should think very carefully about the pros and cons of naming the group something other than the St X 20s group. Although the group name is bland, it is also very descriptive and requires little explanation. The fact that it is non-descript means that, while it may not have zip, it does it grate, either: the kinds of names that are most attractive to some people also tend to be off-putting to others.
CHAPTER 10
COMMON PROBLEMS AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

I. Overview

Every Christian community inevitably experiences conflict, obstacles, and unexpected challenges. This chapter will address some common issues that may develop and offer some practical suggestions. Two comments apply to almost everything that might come up. First, problems and tensions should not be seen as an aberration, or a sign that the group must be failing and on the brink of disaster. The strange thing would be if there were no problems or tensions. Second, open communication is essential. Often simply addressing some conflict or difficulty can cause it to evaporate immediately, or at least transform it into something manageable.

Christian community cannot and should not be manufactured, and problems in community invariably involve elements that are unique to particular situations. Nonetheless, because human nature is the same everywhere, and because Christian community has certain essential characteristics that transcend particular situations, there are common problems that come up repeatedly in the course of ordinary developments. The following, then, are suggestions and ideas that are likely to prove helpful for dealing with common problems, though not in the sense of a trouble-shooting guide for an appliance. Sometimes the sheer naming of common problems can be helpful – it tells us that we are not alone – and hopefully the practical suggestions given here will also prove helpful in addressing these common problems, or in circumventing them entirely.

II. Disagreements and burn-out in the core team

The 20s group depends on the core team for its flourishing. Without a well-functioning core team, the 20s group simply cannot thrive. The key to a successful core team is simple but challenging: a common commitment to unity and looking out for each other. If this commitment is there – however imperfectly it is lived out – the core team will thrive.
Avoiding burn-out

The 20s group depends on young adults taking ownership of the group and dividing among themselves the organizational responsibilities. Because such organizational work is fluid and often vaguely defined, it is easy for volunteers – who are often very generous by disposition – to take on more than they should. After a few months, or during periods of great stress, this over-extension can take its toll, and then the volunteer might need to drop out entirely.

To avoid such burn-out, it is essential that core team members look out for each other, and when they think somebody has too much on their plate, to say something and offer to help. Often the people who most need assistance will be the last to ask for it. The 20s group president should be particularly attentive to this issue. For example, the president may sense that a member of the core team seems frazzled or overworked. The president should take the initiative of mentioning this observation to him or her, and seeing if he or she would like to take a step back or needs help.

Lastly, although positions involve a commitment of one year, it is important that core team members keep in mind that this commitment should not cause them to hesitate dropping out if they feel that their responsibilities have become too much. Once a group has become established, finding a replacement is not usually difficult.

Balancing structure with creativity

The 20s group model is deliberately focused on encouraging creativity and full ownership of the group by young adults. The goal is to create a space where people feel free to try new ideas, even crazy ones, and see if they work – and then not particularly care if they don’t. But this space for creativity can only be maintained if there is also some basic structure.

The basic structure of the group comes from the weekly meeting. Therefore the core team must be very, very cautious about modifying the format of the weekly meeting. In practice, this means that any proposed modifications should have strong support from the entire core team before they are implemented. Any serious reservations by a minority indicate that it would not be good to proceed with the proposed modification. The stakes are too high to mess around.

However, just because a proposal is not a good idea for the weekly meeting doesn’t mean that it isn’t a great idea for a different meeting. For example, some core team members might propose dropping music during adoration and praying the rosary instead, or adding time for
charismatic prayer, or substituting faith discussion for more intellectual studies of particular texts. All of these are worthy proposals, but some might not appeal to everybody, and in fact might alienate others. Because the weekly meeting must be for everybody, and especially for the new member, it is not the place for such innovations. Now, when there are no musicians available, it might make sense to pray the rosary during adoration, and somebody might run a Fifth Monthly Meeting and introduce some new experience (perhaps lectio divina, a form of charismatic prayer, or study of some theological text). Such occasional events might be very appropriate and beneficial. But structural changes that might jeopardize the weekly meeting’s role in meeting the needs of the group as a whole should not be entertained. Instead, people with such interests should be encouraged to start meeting at another time.

Guarding the integrity of the weekly meeting also minimizes disagreements in the core team. Even when people are strongly opposed to a particular modification of the weekly meeting, they might be very supportive of the same idea in a different context. Moreover, if they really do not like a certain idea, they can just not attend, whereas altering the structure of the weekly meeting forces them to either participate or absent themselves from the main meeting of the group.

Having the constancy of the weekly meeting also encourages creativity. Everybody knows that the weekly meeting will “always be there,” so that if some experiment flops it doesn’t matter: it won’t impact the vitality of the group.

Handling disagreement

The discussion and consensus oriented style of the core team’s administration is designed to surface disagreement, provoke discussion, and then lead the core team to reach decisions that everybody can support or at least accept. The purpose of the discussion is not simply to decide between multiple options. In the course of the discussion, the group may come to see new possibilities, or at least recognize that the option that has the most support needs to be implemented in a way that responds to the concerns of the minority. In short, disagreement itself is not a problem: it is a sign that people feel comfortable voicing what they really think, and that the core team is working toward a resolution that incorporates different perspectives.

Nonetheless, disagreement can become a problem if it is not handled properly. To avoid disagreements leading to resentment or tension, first, each member of the core team should guard against pushing forward opinions stridently, make an effort to listen to what others say,
and exhibit a readiness to withdraw objections when a certain decision generates a groundswell of support from others. Second, when one member feels that another core team member’s behavior is problematic, it is important that he or she address the issue sooner rather than later, taking counsel from others if necessary. Minor disagreements can become a source of major tension if they are not addressed promptly. Christ gives very practical advice about how to go about resolving disagreement (see Mt 18:15-20), and his words emphasize the importance of raising concerns directly with the person involved.

Personality clashes, conflicts, and disagreements are inevitable, and that means there will be a constant need for forgiveness. A wise old Dominican friar once said that the ideal community is where we can forgive and be forgiven. When there is a combination of frank discussion of conflict and a readiness to forgive, the most serious internal problems can be avoided.

**Dealing with problematic personalities**

The core team’s openness to all who wish to join enhances the sense of ownership of group members, fosters a collaborative spirit, and encourages more people to volunteer. However, it may happen that somebody joins who, for whatever reason, is very disruptive, and single-handedly creates many internal problems. In such circumstances, core team members may wish to consult with each other, and especially with the chaplain or advisor, to assess the situation. Every effort should be made to see if somebody can take the individual aside and gently explain how his or her behavior is disruptive, in the hope that the individual will improve and be able to continue on the core team. In more serious cases, or if such a correction is not effective, it may be necessary to ask this individual not to attend core team meetings, at least for a period of time. If the chaplain or advisor is involved in the day-to-day activities of the 20s group, he or she may be the natural person for this delicate task.

**III. Welcoming new members with special needs or challenging personalities**

Since the central purpose of the 20s group is to create a Christ-centered community of young adults, an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality are especially important. Consequently, group members should give special thought to welcoming new members with special needs or challenging personalities.
**Child care**

Single parents and married couples may feel inhibited from attending 20s group meetings if they do not have easy access to child care. If new members join who have infants or small children, the core team may be able to arrange for child care, especially during the weekly meeting. Other parishioners, especially members of the parish youth group, may be very happy to assist.

**Welcoming challenging personalities**

A warm welcome is easy to extend when new members are interesting, amiable, well put-together, and ready to contribute to the group. But if the group is successful in cultivating a healthy Christ-centered community, new members will inevitably come along who are attracted by the 20s group community partly because they find it much more difficult than the average person to find such a warm welcome. In the concrete encounter with such persons, the group has a special and defining opportunity to welcome Christ. If it meets this challenge, not only will the group gain a new member, but the group’s charity and fellowship will deepen in ways that will enrich everybody. If it fails to seize this opportunity, the group will slowly but surely drift toward becoming a Christian clique.

The group depends on the core team to set the tone. If core team members make an effort to extend a warm welcome, even if some group members are not able to follow suit, such (understandable and inevitable) individual failures will not harm the group’s spirit.

By the same token, the group should not tolerate inappropriate behavior or enable psychological pathology. Sometimes generous group members may feel an obligation to cater to somebody’s neediness in ways that are unhelpful to everybody involved. Such persons may need to be encouraged to maintain firm personal boundaries, and to realize that they cannot solve all of the needy person’s problems nor should they try. Because situations are often complex and confusing, when problems and questions arise, group members may want to take counsel with each other, and especially with the group’s chaplain and/or advisor.

Groups should be particularly cautious about the possibility that older men may be attracted to group events, and may pose as being younger than they are, because they are drawn by the younger women in the group. Sometimes this is innocent: an older man might attend group events, for example, not realizing that there is an upper age limit. Nonetheless, many groups have reported problems with older men attending group events and behaving inappropriately
toward the women in the group. Sometimes such men are obviously socially awkward, sometimes they are not. It is a frequent problem, and can have significantly disruptive consequences, but it can be avoided by enforcing the group’s upper age limit.

IV. Aging-out

One of the most challenging issues of young adult ministry is what to do when members have grown older than a particular young adult group’s demographic. The same problem confronts the 20s group. While many young adults will have moved on from the group for a variety of reasons – other interests, new job, marriage, children, etc. – before they become too old for the group, many young adults may not find it easy to move on, especially if many of their younger friends are still involved in the 20s group.

However, there are reasons to hope that such problems will be minimized with the 20s group model. First, because the model is parish-based, young adults will hopefully have become more grounded in parish life, and thus be able to more naturally find other ways to be involved in the life of the parish. Second, the very name of the group removes the expectation that it would be appropriate to remain involved in the group indefinitely, and thus encourages people to plan ahead. Nonetheless, because this model has only emerged in recent years, it is not entirely clear how aging-out will tend to play out in the 20s group context.

If enough members are aging-out around the same time, it may be possible to establish another group (e.g., a 30s group, a reading club, a men’s or women’s group, etc.) that gives these members an alternative ecclesial context. If the adoration portion of the 20s group meeting is open to the parish – as it ideally should be – other groups may want to join the 20s group for the adoration, and then meet separately.
CHAPTER 11

FINAL THOUGHTS

The aspiration that humanity nurtures, amid countless injustices and sufferings, is the hope of a new civilization marked by freedom and peace. But for such an undertaking, a new generation of builders is needed. Moved not by fear or violence but by the urgency of genuine love, they must learn to build, brick by brick, the city of God within the city of man.

Allow me, dear young people, to consign this hope of mine to you: you must be those "builders"! You are the men and women of tomorrow. The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with him in the building of the civilization of love.

—Pope John Paul II, Toronto, July 2002

Community is one of the most pressing felt needs among young adults, and community is something that the Church can provide like no other society or institution. The Church is the mystical body of Christ, and it has been entrusted with the Word of God, with Christ’s new commandment of loving service, and above all with the Eucharist. It is the fullest expression of the home and communion that is sought by all, but especially the young.

There is no question that the Church has something to offer today’s young adults, and there are many reasons for hope, for encouragement, and for confidence in God’s continuing action. We hope that this manual will be a useful resource for those who desire to help Catholic young adults claim their full place in the Church, and to welcome to the community of the Church those who are now far from it.
APPENDIX A

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF DIFFERENT CORE TEAM POSITIONS

I. Overview

Some core team positions are essential to every 20s group, such as president, chaplain, and secretary. Other positions are established according to the needs of a particular group. For example, while it is ideal to have a service coordinator who is assisted by a service committee, when a group is starting, there may not even be a service coordinator, but simply one core team member delegated to organize both social and service events. Similarly, the secretary may also serve as the group’s treasurer, but if the group has a sizeable budget, then it might make sense to divide the responsibilities. Moreover, if the group decides to add another meeting or regular activity (e.g., a women’s bible study), there will need to be a core team member responsible for it.

The rule of thumb is to divide responsibilities as much as possible. This has a number of positive effects. Nobody is overburdened, members feel more ownership of the group, and the group does not fall apart if somebody has to step back.

Generally, when a core team is first starting, there are usually a minimal number of positions, and then gradually the core team expands, and positions are multiplied to spread the growing responsibilities more manageably.

What follows, then, are descriptions of different core team positions that may or may not be appropriate for a particular 20s group in a particular stage of its growth. They are meant to give a sense of how tasks might be divided; the actual composition of the core team should be formed in response to particular needs and circumstances.

II. Core team position descriptions

1. President

The president is the group’s “wide-angle lens” and its primary symbol of unity. It is the president’s responsibility to lead by word and example, to serve as representative of the group
when necessary, to keep an eye out to make sure that issues and problems that arise are dealt with judiciously, and to look out for other core team members if they start to seem overburdened. The president should be in close contact with the chaplain and/or advisor, especially when some concern or difficulty surfaces.

- Works to ensure that the 20s group and especially the 20s group core team run smoothly and maintain a spirit of unity
- Leads the weekly meeting
- Sends out weekly email announcements
- Sets times and locations for core team meetings
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

Advice for 20s Group Presidents

It should be emphasized that the 20s group president is a demanding position. It requires a great deal of prudence, patience, and charity. In view of its special demands, here is some good advice from a former 20s group president:

- You can’t go wrong being nice to people.
- Delegate as much as possible because there will always be more than enough for you to do.
- Having someone to confide in is very helpful. This may even be someone outside the group who can give you an objective perspective.
- Be present. Attend as many group events as possible. This is the best way to get to know people and develop good rapport, which always helps when resolving conflicts/crises.
- No matter how hard you try, you cannot be all things to all people. Be able to deliver bad news.

2. Chaplain and/or Advisor

The chaplain is a priest or deacon who oversees the group’s connection to the parish, and ensures provision of the group’s sacramental ministry. The chaplain may be assisted by an advisor, a lay person or religious who exercises some pastoral authority over the group. To the
extent that is possible, the chaplain and/or the advisor are also involved in the daily activities of the 20s group, and especially in the meetings and discussions of the core team. Moreover, because the chaplain and/or advisor are present to the group without being fully part of it, they provide an important outlet for the group. People will often feel more comfortable confiding in them about problems in the group or core team. They also have a special vantage point from which to observe group dynamics and offer advice or suggestions when necessary. The chaplain and/or advisor should make every effort to avoid compromising their objectivity in order to safeguard this special role.

- Presides and preaches at weekly adoration, perhaps in rotation with other priests or deacons
- Provides occasional opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Serves as liaison to the parish staff
- Oversees doctrinal and pastoral issues as they arise
- Oversees 20s group retreat planning
- Organizes occasional special events (especially spiritual events)
- Provides advice to core team members as questions arise
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

3. **Secretary**

The secretary serves the core team by preparing the agenda, leading the actual meetings of the core team, and then afterwards distributing the minutes.

- Sends out an email to see if anyone has agenda items
- Prepares agenda
- Runs core team meetings and takes minutes
- Reads minutes and verifies that core team members are implementing decisions
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team
4. Treasurer

The treasurer manages the group’s funds, pays vendors, and liaises with parish staff as necessary, especially if the group’s budget is managed by the parish business manager.

- Oversees use of annual budget and fundraising
- Serves as a liaison with the business manager of the parish
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

5. Music Coordinator

The music coordinator is usually a musician and ensures that there is music as often as possible at the weekly adoration. He or she recruits musicians, arrange schedules, provides music materials for musicians and group members, and prepares whatever equipment is necessary.

- Prepares music and facilities for weekly adoration
- Organizes and distributes the schedule of musicians for weekly adoration
- Sends quarterly email to interested people (who have responded to call for musicians) asking for volunteers to lead music or to sing/play with a music leader
- Copies and distributes song lyrics if needed
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

6. Faith Discussion Coordinator

The faith discussion coordinator oversees the rotating schedule of faith discussion. He or she makes sure that facilities and any special requirements are provided, recruits small group discussion leaders, and is ready to lead the weekly meeting if the president is unavailable. This coordinator may take charge of one of the four weekly formats.

- Schedules meeting locations and sets up room for meeting
- Assists president with leading weekly meetings when necessary
• Coordinates with Lecture, Catechesis, Member Talk, Gospel, Music Coordinator

• Informs president of the need for schedule changes (e.g., when there is a conflict with parish facilities)

• Coordinates small group leaders, recruits new leaders, and provides training sessions if necessary (sometimes by arranging sessions with a member of the parish staff)

• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

7. Lecture Coordinator (1st Week)

The lecture coordinator oversees the monthly talk by a visiting speaker. Ideally, the speaker coordinator is assisted by a committee that meets 2-3 times per year to plan the selection of speakers and topics.

• Coordinates topic and speaker selection for the 1st week

• Arranges planning meetings of a lecture committee 2-3 times per year

• Executes decisions of the lecture selection meetings after consulting with chaplain

• Introduces speakers before their talks

• Keeps an eye out for new and interesting speakers

• Works with treasurer to provide compensation for each speaker, if possible

• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

8. Scripture Study Coordinator (2nd Week)

This coordinator oversees the Scripture Study format. Ideally, he or she prepares discussion questions in advance and then consults with the chaplain or advisor for feedback, in order to make discussion questions as effective as possible.

• Coordinates Scripture Study format
• Prepares discussion questions for the Scripture Study in consultation with the chaplain and/or advisor

• Distributes and gathers Scripture readings and questions if necessary

• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

9. **Member Talk Coordinator (3rd Week)**

This coordinator oversees the Member Talk and the discussion afterwards. He or she recruits volunteers from the group and helps volunteers to prepare their talks by reviewing the message and offering constructive feedback. The coordinator is also responsible for preparing questions for the discussion after the talk.

• Coordinates member talk format

• Reviews and discusses member talk with speaker prior to meeting

• Prepares questions for the discussion and makes copies

• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

10. **Theology Discussion Coordinator (4th Week)**

This coordinator prepares the material for the monthly theology discussion. He or she either selects the text and prepares the discussion questions or finds an appropriate study guide. Ideally, the materials are prepared in advance with consultation from the chaplain and/or advisor.

• Prepares or selects the texts and discussion questions

• Prepares and distributes materials

• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team
11. Small Group Leaders

Small group leaders are “on call” to lead discussions at weekly meetings. They can remove their name from the list of willing leaders at any time. They may or may not be part of the core team; many young adults may be happy to lead small group discussions, but would rather not be involved in the core team.

- Available at weekly meetings to lead a small group discussion
- If they wish, participate in decisions and meetings of the core team

12. Bible Study/Theology Study Coordinator

This coordinator organizes various study cycles of the bible or theology throughout the year. Before each 3-6 week cycle, the coordinator arranges for an open meeting to decide the topic and materials. The coordinator also recruits volunteers to host the meetings and emails reminders with directions to the 20s group.

- Coordinates the various study cycles
- Arranges organizational meeting to select topic and materials
- Finds members to host each study cycle in their homes
- Sends weekly email to remind 20s group with topic and directions
- Leads study or finds a leader
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

13. Social Chairperson

The social chairperson is in charge of arranging the various social events during the year. Ideally there is a committee that assists in the planning and execution of these events. Often the social chairperson needs to recruit volunteers to help with individual events or to bring food and drink.
Group members will often come forward to organize various social events, some spontaneously, some with more planning. The social chairperson may want to help them in some way, but such above-and-beyond help is not the responsibility of the social chairperson. The social chairperson should, however, do what he or she can to foster an atmosphere where people feel comfortable and encouraged to come forward and organize their own ideas for events.

- Chairs social committee, which may meet multiple times to plan social events
- Coordinates and organizes official 20s group sponsored social events
- Coordinates monthly Sunday Mass and brunch/dinner
- Coordinates food and games for receptions
- Keeps an eye out for opportunities to integrate with parish social events
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

14. Service Chairperson

The service chairperson investigates and arranges the practical details of various kinds of service and social justice work. Ideally he or she is assisted by a committee that helps with the planning and execution of service events throughout the year.

- Chairs service committee
- Coordinates and organizes opportunities for service through regular forms of service and quarterly events
- Encourages interested group members to lead service events
- Keeps an eye out for opportunities to integrate with parish service events
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team
15. Public Relations Chairperson

The public relations chairperson oversees the 20s group relationship with the wider church and the surrounding community. This takes two main forms. The first is the publicizing the 20s group among young adults, parishes, the diocese, and the community. The second is networking and building relationships with various ecclesial communities.

- Chairs public relations committee
- Works with committee and the webmaster to publicize the 20’s group and design and distribute various forms of promotional materials
- Coordinates outreach to young adults in the parish and archdiocese
- Coordinates speaking about the group at local parishes
- Networks with other young adult groups in the area, local campus ministries, and the diocesan office for young adult ministry
- Distributes information to local parishes and the diocese about the group, especially as a major special event approaches
- Keeps the local diocese updated about the group’s meetings and events, so that the diocese can distribute the information to others via the diocese’s website, parish communications, emails, etc.
- Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

16. Webmaster

The webmaster maintains and updates the 20s group website. The webmaster should set realistic goals about how frequently he or she can update the website, and then structure the materials on the website accordingly. For example, if the webmaster does not have time to update the website regularly, the 20s group should not attempt to provide a very detailed calendar of events on the website.

- Oversees and updates the website regularly
- Adds pictures of events to website
• Updates the website’s calendar of events
• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

17. Welcome Committee

The purpose of the welcome committee is to make everyone feel welcome in the 20s group. The committee gathers the contact information of new members at the weekly meeting, contacts new members with information about the group, and organizes an annual social gathering to welcome new members. Committee members might also stand at the entrance of the discussion portion of the weekly meeting and greet young adults as they enter.

• Makes effort to welcome everyone, new and old, at meetings
• Collects email addresses from new members at weekly meetings
• Extends welcome to “lost members” of the contact list by email or phone
• Organizes annual or semi-annual party to welcome new members
• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team

18. Members-at-large

Members-at-large are core team members who attend core team meetings and participate in discussions and decisions, but do not have a particular position. Often they serve as all-purpose volunteers who step up to serve in a variety of capacities. They may also serve on different committee within the group.

• Assists the group in a variety of ways
• May serve on internal committees
• Participates in decisions and meetings of the core team
APPENDIX B

PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR SILENT ADORATION

By Fr. Hugh Vincent Dyer, O.P. Used with permission.

Prayer Intentions for the Young People of the World

You are invited to pray in silence for these and any other intentions you may have for young people. We gather to pray especially for those who do not pray for themselves that the young people of the world will be transformed and led to a life of true happiness.

(For spoken litanies, respond “Lord have mercy” after each petition)

For young people who do not yet know the love of Christ, that the Church would bring them His love.

For young people who do not know they have a mother in Mary.

For young people who have been inadequately taught about the Gospel and gifts of our tradition.

For Christian young people that the Holy Spirit will renew within them the graces of Baptism and Confirmation.

For young people who have fallen away from the practice of faith.

For the young people of the world who are orphans living on the streets and for those who are without the necessities of life: food, clean water, clothing, shelter.

For young people who are forced into slavery and prostitution and for those whose work is unrewarding.

For the young who live in war torn areas of the world especially those who have never known days of peace.

For young people who suffer because of racism and prejudice.

For young immigrants struggling to learn a new language and way of life.

For young people who suffer from severe boredom and are in need of the interior life of Faith.

For young people who lack genuine affirmation and for those who feel totally alone.
For young people who suffer anxiety, depression, and other forms of mental illness.
For young people who are considering suicide and for those who practice forms of mutilation.
For young people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.
For young people who suffer from terminal illness.
For young people who suffer from learning and physical disabilities.
For young people who are burdened by debt and financial troubles.
For young people who are enslaved to addictions, especially those caught by drugs and alcohol.
For young people who find their community in gangs and other criminal associations.
For young people caught by the allure of materialism and fame.
For young people who are in bondage to excessive entertainment and the tyranny of fads and fashion.
For young people in bondage to pornography and other forms of sexual addiction.
For young people that they will be given the virtue of chastity and that they will come to know that a more chaste society is a more just society.
For young people who are caught in practices of the occult and Satanic worship.
For young people who have been physically, emotionally, sexually, or psychologically abused.
For young women who have had an abortion and for those who are considering one.
For young men who have lost a child through abortion and for those who are considering participation in abortion.
For young mothers who are raising children alone.
For young people serving in the military.
For young people who suffer because of a broken home.
For Divine protection upon all young people who are vulnerable in any way.
For young people who are searching for their vocation in life.
For young men and women who are seeking a Christian spouse.
For young priests and religious who are struggling with their vocation.
For young married couples who are struggling with the challenges of life and parenthood.

For young married couples who are having difficulty conceiving, those seeking to adopt, and for those with special needs children.

For young single people trying to embrace the fullness of Christian life as single people.

For young people in the legal and medical professions that they will fight to uphold the dignity of human life in all its stages.

Loving Father, grant all your children the virtues necessary for their condition and state in life, heal and liberate them according to their needs. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. AMEN!
Prayer Intentions for the Poor

You are invited to pray in silence for these and any intentions you may have for the poor of the world. We join together in solidarity with the poor to pray for them. The Lord hears the cry of the poor. We cry out to the Lord especially for those who do not pray for themselves.

For the poor who do not yet know Christ

For the poor that they will come to know Mary as their mother and advocate

For the Christian community that it will ever increase its outreach to the poor

For all who work among the poor that they will be blessed with the gift of perseverance

For Christians who are fearful of the poor that they may come to see the suffering of Christ in the poor and move to embrace the poor in genuine friendship

For the conversion of the enemies of Christ’s poor who would seek to eliminate them rather than to serve them

For the conversion of creditors and all others who take advantage of the poor for material gain

For the poor who do not yet know their dignity as children of God

For the poor who lack the necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter and clean water

For poor pregnant women who are considering abortion that they may find hope through the Church

For poor single parents

For poor parents who are raising large families

For poor parents who are trying to raise children in the midst of violent neighborhoods

For poor parents who are raising mentally or physically disabled children

For poor immigrants who work to support their families here and abroad

For the poor who are taken advantage of for the sake of political gain

For the poor who receive wages inadequate to support a family

For the poor who live with massive financial debt

For the poor who have missed opportunities for education

For the poor who seek false hope in gambling, the lottery, and dealing drugs
For the poor who suffer from addiction to drugs and alcohol
For poor women and children who suffer from abusive relationships
For poor children who have been abandoned by one or both parents
For the elderly poor who have no one to care for them
For the poor who get lost in excessive entertainment and meaningless frivolity
For migrant workers especially those who have been maimed using farm equipment
For the poor who are sick and those who do not have adequate health care
For the poor who face frustrating paperwork and daunting bureaucracies in order to have their needs answered
For the poor who make their homes among the garbage dumps of the world
For the mentally ill homeless who wander our streets
For the poor whose life of want has led them to crime and prison
For the poor who have been driven to a life of prostitution
For those who remain poor because of racial injustice or war
For the poor who suffer embarrassment because of their poverty
For the poor who have been given over to debilitating anger that they will come to peace and the hope for a better future
For the poor who are unable to rest on the Sabbath because of financial constraints
For the poor who find it difficult to answer the call to priesthood or the consecrated life because of material want

St. Vincent de Paul Pray for us Bl. Teresa of Calcutta Pray for us
St. Lawrence Pray for us All you Patrons of the Poor Pray for us

Almighty God, Father of the Poor, grant to your poor the virtues necessary for their lives and provide for all their needs. May we who receive the Body and Blood of your Son be strengthened to render faithful and generous service to the poor. We ask this through Jesus Christ your son who became poor for our sake. AMEN!
Prayer Intentions for Respect Life Month

We gather to pray in silence for a greater respect for life among members of the human family. We pray for all those whose life and quality of life is threatened by sin and false views of the human person. We pray especially for those who do not pray for themselves. Please add any petitions you may have.

For the virtue of gratitude to be given to all people

For Christians to be given courage to live their Christian vocation as an adventure of life and love

For Catholics, that in eating the Body and Blood of the Lord they will be moved to give of themselves in service to those who are most vulnerable

For a return to meditation on the Crucified Christ as a means for gaining sensitivity toward the suffering of others

For young married men and women that they will be open and generous in the call to have children and for those who are seeking to adopt children

For an end to abortion and for the conversion of doctors who perform abortions

For the Sisters of Life and all consecrated persons who are dedicated to promoting the dignity of human life

For all who give of their time and resources in the cause of defending life

For the unborn that our society will respect their dignity as persons from the moment of conception

For baby girls in China and India who face the threat of sex-selected abortion

For babies who are threatened by abortion because of Down’s syndrome and other birth defects

For young men and women who are considering the possibility of abortion that their hearts be turned from fear to love

For all those who live under the threats of terror, violence, and war

For all who suffer from racism and for the survivors of genocide, especially the people of Rwanda, Kenya, and the Sudan

For those who are considering suicide that they will be given hope

For those whose lives are made difficult by physical or mental disabilities
For an end to the death penalty and for all prisoners on death row that their hearts will be turned to the love of Christ

For the success of stem-cell technologies developed with respect for human life

For a deeper awareness of the call to unite our sufferings with the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of the world

For those who do not have adequate health care and for doctors who provide generous and free service

For all who suffer a loss of hope, especially those who are lonely

For elderly people who suffer in poorly run nursing homes and institutions

For elderly, comatose, and terminally ill people who live under the threat of euthanasia

For the people of the world who live under threat of famine due to political machinations

For a more just distribution of the world’s goods

For an increase of respect for the value of chastity in promoting the common good

For women and children who suffer from various forms of abuse

For an end to the gratuitous portrayal of violence and sex in television and movies

For the success of film, theater, literature, music, architecture, and art that encourage the human spirit and foster a respect for life and authentic human culture

For those who work is boring, difficult, or unrewarding

For those who are considering divorce that they be given the virtues necessary for forgiveness and perseverance

For medical professionals and law makers that they will have the courage to defend life

St. Gerard Majella  Pray for us  St. Gianna Beretta Molla  Pray for us
St. Maximilian Kolbe  Pray for us  All you patrons of Life  Pray for us

Eternal Father, look with mercy upon our human culture and raise up saints in your Church to give prophetic witness to the sanctity of all human life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN!
APPENDIX C

RANDOM QUESTION IDEAS FOR WEEKLY MEETINGS

By Lisa Fiamingo. Used with permission from “Path of Grace” Spirit & Truth Guide.

The following ice breaker questions can be used during introductions at weekly meetings:

- Describe one item of clothing you love but probably should throw away.
- What toothpaste do you use? What deodorant do you use?
- What is the color of your toothbrush?
- If you could have any super power what would it be?
- What movie best describes your life?
- If you could be a fly on the wall of anyone’s house, who’s would it be?
- If you could be stuck in the elevator with anyone who would you choose? (dead or alive)
- Favorite toy growing up.
- Favorite song you jam out too when no one is looking.
- What was your first car? Did it have a name?
- Name a pet peeve you have.
- What is something about you that your parents would probably say is annoying?
- Favorite holiday tradition. Favorite meal for holiday season.
- Holiday tradition that your family has that you think is cool.
- When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- What cereal did you beg your parents for when walking down the cereal aisle as a child?
- What cartoons did you have to watch when growing up?
- What’s your favorite 80’s style?
- What song gets stuck in your head and you can’t get it out?
- What food is not appetizing to you but is appetizing to most other people?
- Favorite expression?
- What was a gift that you knew you would re-gift as soon as you opened it?
APPENDIX D

ANNUAL SURVEY

20s Group Survey

We really appreciate your presence!
It would be very helpful to have your honest feedback to each question below!

1) What do you think is going well?

2) What do you think needs improvement?

3) What other ideas do you have?

Name (optional)______________________________________