

**“Explore”**  
**A Guide for Companioning High School Students**  
**Who Are Exploring Ministry**

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**Framing, Overall Goals and Purpose**

This three-session guide is intended for junior high and high school students who want to dive more deeply into conversations about call and ministry. Adolescents and young people are particularly pressured in our culture to be high-achieving, to go after success, and to select a career that guarantees stability. The temptation to offer something similar in church and ministry settings is unfortunately often no different.

The purpose of this [curriculum] is less about offering advice to students about a particular path to choose in the future, and more about creating a semi- structured space for students to hear about possibilities for ministry and service in their *current* lives and church experiences.

It seeks to ground students in an understanding of *their own* relationship with God, the stories of *their* lives and faith journeys and the people and experiences that shape them, and how the gifts, wisdom and passions *they already hold within* are some of the best tools for understanding who they are and what God is calling them to, today and in the future. Think where spiritual direction meets youth ministry! Rather than an image of someone looking outward at many external things (like in a panoramic photo), this content is shaped around an image of someone dipping their head towards their chest, connecting their mind to their heart.

Overall, this content seeks to 1) remind students that all Christians are all called to ministry by virtue of our baptism, 2) that we all have a story of God’s work and presence in our lives, and that that story doesn’t always have to be profound in a performative way, and 3) we are called every day, and that exercising our spiritual gifts as faithful leaders can happen in ours and students’ lives every day-- not only 10 or 15 years from now.

## **Themes/Layout**

Session 1: Linking Our Stories with God's Story

Session 2: Contemporary Spiritual Gifts Inventory and Church Engagement  
Session 3: Call in Everyday Life and Decision-Making

## **Flow of Each Gathering**

- 1) Prayer and check-in: How is your soul/what's going on with you?
- 2) Content "meat:" leader frames the topic of that day, followed by one or two exercises, guided conversation, or activity.
  - o Sessions 2 and 3 will begin with group sharing about the "assignment" from the week before
- 3) Spiritual practice (Leader does the first and invites students to lead in the following two session)

## **Session 1: Linking Our Stories with God's Story**

*Focus: At the root of understanding our call, however that manifests, is an understanding of who we fundamentally are as God's beloved, and God's relationship with the people of the Bible and with us.*

### **Supplies**

- Flip chart paper and markers
- Images of God* book by Marie-Helene Delval

1. Begin with prayer, introductions and "why are you here?" (10 mins.)
2. Leader explains a bit about what this small group is (can use language from paragraph 1 of this guide) (5 mins.)
3. Create a community covenant and have people sign it: How do we want to be community together? (10 mins.)

### **Some of my favorites include (some are in "Covenants of Presence"):**

- o Be fully present: extend and presume welcome
  - o Author your story, not someone else's
  - o Be aware of who's talking a lot and who's not (especially if that's you)
  - o Practice confidentiality
  - o Turn to wonder (especially if you find yourself feeling judgmental or certain about what you're hearing)
  - o Be mindful of intent vs. impact
4. The meat of it: the story of God and linking it with our stories (20 minutes)

*Begin by reminding students of the baptism story of Jesus. God's grace and belovedness extends to us and is the foundation for our calling.*

### **Part I: Ground in scripture**

#### **Have participants read the following aloud:**

- o Genesis 2: 4b-15
  - o Malachi 1: 10-13, 3:1-7
  - o John 10:10b
  - o Philippians 2:1-11
- Open up conversation about the stories about who God is and who we are (identity) highlighted in these texts (examples might be living abundantly, tending the earth and caring for one another, being good stewards, caring for the least of these, challenging the status quo). Have a student write the responses shared on flip chart paper.

**Part II:** Talk about the stories our culture/society impresses on us: the stories about family, community, individuality (vs. individualism) that make us feel a sense of

belonging on the one hand; and on the other hand, performance, perfection, success, status that make us feel ashamed, self-doubtful, and afraid. Have someone write these on a separate sheet of flip chart paper.

- Open up for conversation: How are these two sets of narratives different or similar to the story God has for us?

#### 5. Transition to spiritual practice (10 minutes)

Connecting more deeply with vocation, we are all connected to this bigger story of who God is and who God created us to be. How we discern and what we discern based on this larger story is our individual work. It is also shaped by the different ways we experience God in our own lives.

**Images of God exercise:** From the book *Images of God* (use copies from book, and spread them out). Guide the group in the following questions. Invite them to select images in silence, with background music playing.

#### Questions

Pick an image that represents who God has been in your life in the past. Where is God in the picture? Where are you? What is the relationship between you and God?

Pick an image that represents who God is for you right now. Where is God in the picture? Where are you? What is the relationship between you and God?

Pick an image that represents the relationship you hope to have with God in the future. Where is God in the picture? Where are you? What is the relationship between you and God?

#### 6. Assignment for next time:

Bring a snippet of your spiritual autobiography. Think about the various people, communities, activities and values that shape who you are. How do these connect with your sense of your faith? Pick a period of time (week, month, year) or an experience that meant a lot to you, and write, make art/video, or talk about it with someone. Where did you experience God here? What was happening—what did it look, sound, feel, or smell like? You could also think about spiritually low or spiritually high moments, church activities that mean something to you, or things that you're passionate about—things that you notice that make you delighted or fired up. Be prepared to share in our next gathering.

## **Session 2: Spiritual Gifts and Church Engagement**

### Supplies

- Copies of spiritual gifts inventory, and the “so what” guide that goes with them
- Markers or pens

1. Opening prayer (student)

2. Check in

What made you 1) grateful, 2) angry, and 3) energized this month? (10 mins)

3. Group sharing of spiritual autobiography snippets (10 mins)

4. Framing/focus by leader (5 mins):

*Another “building block” of exploring our calls to ministry is discovering our spiritual gifts (the gifts that come naturally to us given by God), and how those gifts can be used not only for the future as we participate in the life of the church, but in our everyday lives and church experiences right now.*

5. Spiritual gifts inventory and connections to things in the church and life (40 minutes)

6. Spiritual practice (student)

7. Assignment

Find one person from this church community and one from your family, school or broader community and have a conversation about gifts and how those gifts are put into practice. Be prepared to share in our next gathering. (Leader share more details as questions come up.

### **Session 3: Call in Everyday Life and Decision-Making**

Supplies Paper

Markers or pens

Decision-making from the soul exercise

1. Opening prayer (student)
2. Check in

What is something small but powerful that you experienced recently or experience on a regular basis? (10 mins)

3. Group sharing of spiritual gifts and conversations.

What did you learn about yourself? What resonated with, surprised, or confused you? (15 mins)

4. Framing/focus by leader (5 mins)

This is the “so what” part of this gathering. We’ve done some internal exploration of our stories and our identity and relationships with God. This is attempting to put it altogether. How do we continue to practice our faith on a daily and weekly basis, individually and with others? How do we use the spiritual gifts God has given us in our everyday lives?

5. Meat of it: Relationship between discernment and decision-making

Part I: Reflection from Richard Rohr (invite two students to read aloud) (10 mins)

“We are each unique incarnations of God, bringing to visible and tangible expression God’s presence in the world... So, how do we discover what is ours to do? How do we connect with our sacred vocation in service to the needs of the world?”

Christian discernment is not the same as decision making. Reaching a decision can be straightforward: we consider our goals and options; maybe we list the pros and cons of each possible choice; and the new choose the action that meets our goal most effectively. Discernment, on the other hand, is about listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God’s desire. As discerning people, we sift through our impulses, motives, and options to discover which ones lead us closer to divine love and compassion for ourselves and other people, and which ones lead us further away.”

Invite students to share what stands out for them, what questions this stirs up, etc.

**Part II: Decision-making from the Soul exercise (25 mins)**

Invite students to reflect on a decision they made recently or will make in the future. It could be related to any number of things, including:

- o Activities or ministries to be part of in the church, based on the spiritual gifts inventory and conversations
- o Relationships with peers, friends, family
- o Academic or social activities

Leader will facilitate exercise, which will invite students to reflect on possibilities through different lenses: body, reason, faith identity (personal experiences of God or scripture), and personal gifts. Think Wesleyan quadrilateral meets spiritual decision-making!

6. Closing spiritual practice (student)

## A Spiritual Gifts Inventory for Youth

This is adapted and summarized from *Serving From the Heart for Youth: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service*

1. Ground in scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 8-22, 27-31
2. What is a spiritual gift? What are spiritual gifts not?
  - A special ability or something that comes naturally to us may be a clue about what our spiritual gifts are. This doesn't mean that we won't need some training or practice. But through our God-given spiritual gifts, we have the capacity, the underlying abilities necessary or success.
  - Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit through God's grace to everyone. They are not earned skills. They are used to build up the kingdom of God and to serve God and others.
3. The inventory (pages 1-5) and descriptions of each gift (5-8)
4. Practicing your gifts (suggestions on pages 8-13)

**Record your answer on the line next to each statement. When you are finished, transfer your responses onto the response form on page 18. Score each one as follows:**

- 4- Very true of me, consistently  
 3- Frequently true of me  
 2- Occasionally true of me  
 1- Infrequently true of me  
 0- Rarely or never true of me

**Answer based on the things that give you life and joy, and things that come naturally to you.**

It's important that you don't answer what you think you should answer!

1. I tend to be organized and am detail-oriented when working on projects or homework.
2. I enjoy participating in mission or ministry in foreign countries and/or with communities who come from a different background than I do.
3. I have talents as a singer, artist, writer or musician, and I connect with God and other people when I use these talents.
4. I am open about my faith, and I seek opportunities to share with others about my faith.
5. I am assured that God keeps God's promises (to love, guide and transform us).
6. I enjoy sharing my material possessions with others.

7. I regularly pray for healing on behalf of others and believe that God can answer those prayers in powerful ways.
8. I enjoy the behind-the-scenes work in activities.
9. I enjoy reading and studying the Bible in depth. I like to wrestle with scriptures.
10. Friends or family members often reach out to me, looking for help or direction.
11. My heart hurts when I see people who are hurting, and I am moved to action.
12. I like to support others in their spiritual growth.
13. When I see that a person or a church community is not following God's desires, I feel called to encourage them to turn back to God.
14. I am able to explain aspects of faith or the Bible in ways that others can understand and relate to their lives.
15. People often ask me for advice about difficult decisions or situations.
16. I enjoy helping plan and organize events or projects.
17. I feel a connection to serve people in different contexts than my own. I find it energizing to be surrounded by people who think differently than me, and I find that I can be a bridge between my community and others.
18. I am able to gently guide people in a way that helps them remain faithful to God.
19. I like to invite people to come to church or youth group events with me.
20. I don't get overly discouraged when bad things happen, because I know God is there with me and is always at work.
21. I give significant time and money to church and/or charitable causes.
22. I feel prompted to pray for people by name who are in need and are hurting.
23. I enjoy using my talents and skills to help in a variety of ways around the church or other communities I'm a part of.
24. I like to tell others what I have learned through reading and studying the Bible. I think it can speak to our current times.
25. I inspire others to volunteer, and I support their work when they do.
26. I want to follow Jesus' example of compassion by helping people in need. I can also serve people in need in a way that affirms their dignity.

27. I develop friendships with others and encourage them in their faith walk.
28. When faith communities or my individual friends and people I know start to follow too closely with the narratives of society (success, status, greed, etc.), I call it out and encourage them to remember God's desires for justice, care for others, and self-reflection.
29. I enjoy preparing and organizing material so that I can teach it to others.
30. I easily understand and follow the steps needed to achieve a goal. I like to work with issues involving systems, structures, and procedures.
31. I like to encourage others to assume leadership roles.
32. I remind people of their gifts and of God's presence in their lives and the world.
33. I can share the gospel in ways that are helpful to people.
34. When I see someone in need, I share whatever I have.
35. I believe that just offering a kind touch to someone can make a difference in their lives.
36. I often help out at home, school, or church by doing whatever needs to be done.
37. I'm able to think of appropriate scriptures for different situations.
38. I encourage others to develop their skills and abilities. I tend to have a "big picture" perspective and can help others see the vision in a way that is understandable and motivating.
39. I enjoy visiting people who are sick or lonely to bring them a little warmth.
40. I feel the responsibility for caring for people, and nurturing them as they grow in their walk with God.
41. I see things in the world that seem opposed to who God is, and I feel led to expose them.
42. Whenever I learn something new, I can't wait to talk with others about it.
43. I feel powerful when I share my musical gifts. I feel God's connection when I see art, dance or theater or hear music that moves me.
44. I approach challenges with confidence when I know that I am doing what God wants me to do.
45. I like to think of images and stories to describe my faith. I'm an artistic person.

**Total your responses across, then transfer the totals to the corresponding letters below.**

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Total B \_\_\_\_\_

3\_\_\_\_43\_\_\_\_\_45\_\_\_\_\_

Total C \_\_\_\_\_

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Total D \_\_\_\_\_

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**Spiritual Gifts**

A. Organizational Leadership      Score\_\_\_\_\_

B. Apostleship                      Score\_\_\_\_\_

C. Artistic Leadership              Score\_\_\_\_\_

D. Evangelism                      Score\_\_\_\_\_

E. Faith                              Score\_\_\_\_\_

F. Generosity                      Score\_\_\_\_\_

G. Healing                          Score\_\_\_\_\_

- H. Helping Score\_\_\_\_\_
- I. Studying the Bible Score\_\_\_\_\_
- J. Motivational Leadership Score\_\_\_\_\_
- K. Mercy & Compassion Score\_\_\_\_\_
- L. Nurturing Others' Growth Score\_\_\_\_\_
- M. Prophecy Score\_\_\_\_\_
- N. Teaching Score\_\_\_\_\_
- O. Encouragement Score\_\_\_\_\_

**According to my scores, my top 3 gifts are:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Description of Gifts<sup>1</sup>

### **Organizational Leadership**

From the Greek word kubernesis, which means “to steer or guide.”

A person with this gift is able to organize and manage people, information, events, and resources to make projects happen. A person with this gift handles details carefully and thoroughly, and is skilled in determining priorities and in planning and directing steps needed to accomplish a vision.

Scriptures: Acts 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Titus 1:5

### **Apostleship**

From the Greek word Apostolos, which means “delegate, special ambassador of the gospel, messenger.”

A person with this gift is eager to share who God is in new or different contexts. Apostles are sent, meaning they are often capable of and enjoy cross-cultural or cross-lingual work and ministry. Apostles also find creative ways to reach people for whom the gospel might be new.

Scriptures: Acts 6:2-4; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Peter 3:2

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<sup>1</sup>Paraphrased from pp. 20-34 of *Serving from the Heart*.

### **Artistic Leadership**

People with the spiritual gift of artistic leadership are not only art-lovers or performers; they feel a deep spiritual connection to art and a desire to share it with others through worship, leading a community, and connecting art to values and the mission of the church.

Scriptures: There are many depictions of music playing for God in the book of Psalms.

### **Evangelism**

From the Greek word evaggelistes, which means “a preacher of the gospel.”

A person with this gift speaks comfortably about his or her faith, even with people who don't call themselves Christians. This person enjoys helping others see how a life of faith connects with their lives.

Scriptures: Luke 9:6; Acts 5:42; 8: 26-40; 16:6-10

### **Faith**

From the Greek word pistis, which means “faith in God, moral conviction, assurance.”

A person with this gift demonstrates how God keeps promises. This person is able to assure others of God's presence and activity even when things are hard.

Scriptures: Matthew 9:2, 22; Acts 14:22; Ephesians 2:8-9; I Timothy 6:11

### **Generosity**

From the Greek word metadidomi, which means “to give over, share, impart.”

A person with this gift gives freely and joyfully of their time, material resources, and self. A person with this gift may have a knack for good financial management. They are also gifted at connecting resources with a sense of God's purpose and mission. They give of their resources to build up the church and the kingdom.

Scriptures: Luke 3:11; Romans 12:8; I Thessalonians 2:8

### **Healing**

From the Greek word charismas, which means “spiritual endowment,” and iama, which means “cures, healings.”

A person with the gift of healing listens and journeys with others who are sick in body or spirit. Tools include prayer, touch, and words of affirmation. Someone believes and points to the work of God in the midst of illnesses of many kinds, and broken relationships.

Scriptures: Matthews 4:23; Luke 9:11; Acts 4:28-30; 10:38

### **Helping**

From the Greek word diakonia, which means “service, ministry, aid, relief.”

A person with the gift of helping receives spiritual satisfaction from doing everyday, necessary tasks; he or she may prefer to work quietly and without public recognition. When a need arises, a helper often takes care of it without being asked. Helpers are gifted for behind-the-scenes work, and all the little pieces to putting on bigger projects.

Scriptures: Acts 24:23; Philippians 2:25-30; 2 Timothy 4:11; Hebrews 6:10

### **Studying the Bible**

From the Greek word logos, which means “word; something said,” and gnosis, which means “knowledge.”

A person with this gift enjoys studying the Bible and other sources to gain facts, insights, and truth. They enjoy wrestling with different aspects of scripture, even the challenging parts. They know how to bring others close to God through the study of the Bible.

Scriptures: Proverbs 1:7; Jeremiah 3:15; Malachi 2:7; Romans 10:2-3; 2 Peter 1:2-11

### **Motivational Leadership**

From the Greek word proistemi, which means “to preside, maintain, be over.”

A person with this gift is a visionary and motivator who inspires others to work together to make a vision a reality. He or she takes responsibility for direction and setting up steps for achieving a goal, and empowers and builds teams.

Scriptures: John 13:12-17; Philippians 3:17-21; Hebrews 13: 7, 17

### **Mercy and Compassion**

From the Greek word eleo, which means “to have compassion and mercy.”

A person with this gift can feel the hurts with others and journey with them in their suffering. They are called to reach out when someone feels hurt or rejected. This person is also fulfilled by connected a sense of compassion to issues of justice.

Scriptures: Matthew 9: 36; Luke 10:30-37; Colossians 3: 12-15

### **Nurturing Others' Growth**

From the Greek work poimen, which means “shepherd,” and didaskalos, which means “teacher.” Someone who nurtures others’ growth enjoys working with groups of people and nurturing them, especially over time. This nurtures guides, protects, and cares for other Christians as they experience spiritual growth.

Scriptures: Jeremiah 3:15; 7:16; Ezekiel 34; John 10:1-16; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4

### **Prophecy**

From the Greek word propheteuo, which means “speak under inspiration.”

A person with this gift listens carefully to God’s instruction. A prophet warns the people of the consequences of not living out God’s desires. To prophecy does not meant to tell the future; it means to tell the truth in a relevant way.

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 13:2; 14:3. Ephesians 4:11-13; Revelation 19:10

### **Teaching**

From the Greek word didaskalias, which means “instruction, the act of imparting the truth.”

A teacher enjoys the study of faith, including the Bible, and educating others in their spiritual lives. They are able to apply scripture to everyday life. The teacher also prepares through personal study and reflection, paying close attention to detail.

Scriptures: Matthew 28: 19-20; Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 1:7-11; James 3:1

### **Encouragement**

From the Greek word paraklesis, which means “comfort, solace, encouragement.”

Encouragement is similar to the spiritual gift of faith, with an emphasis on highlighting others’ gifts and positive aspects. Encouragement may take many forms and can be done through relationships, music, writings, intercessory prayer, and speaking.

Scriptures: Acts 14:22; 15:31-33; 20:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:2

#### **4. How do I know I’ve really identified my gifts?**

- You will be drawn to use your spiritual gifts. God has equipped you to do so!
- Others will recognize these gifts in you.
- Even when you feel nervous using your gifts in public, you will feel a sense that you are doing what you are meant to do.

#### **So what does this mean? How do I practice these gifts?**

Here are some ways, contexts, and possible roles to connect to for exercising your gifts right now and as you begin to think about the future. As part of your take-home assignment, talk to Zach or Pastors Lauren and Michael about who in the church or community you might connect to. If you have someone in mind, go ahead and reach out to them! We will share our progress during our next gathering.

In the spring, we will circle back and connect you to a particular church community member or ministry for you to begin “trying on” those particular ministries and gifts for your own discernment.

### **1. Organizational Leadership**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- Existing: Youth and children’s ministries (especially trip and event planning parts of these jobs), church administration and finance, church council & other democratic structures that make up the UMC; helping in the church office; learning from pastors how they do a
- Other possibilities, inside and outside the church: Organizational leadership can be part of any number of existing and new ministries. Is there a project you’ve always wanted to be part of? Some other ways to practice this gift include: building teams for school projects; planning events or teams for school clubs and teams; managing multiple assignments for classes at a time; helping your family make & keep goals together; setting early financial goals; exploring jobs related to organizing people, events, and ideas, administration (ad-ministry!)
- Your own ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **2. Apostleship**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing- missions, leadership committees, neighboring in the Conway community
- o Other possibilities, both inside and outside the church: expanding neighboring efforts; creating immersion experiences for congregants to be uncomfortable in healthy ways. Other ways to practice this gift include engaging with students from different backgrounds; exhibiting compassionate leadership; being self-aware in leadership on teams (e.g. sports, etc.); practicing good boundaries; exploring jobs related to leadership, cross-cultural experiences and diversity
- o Your own ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **3. Artistic Leadership**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: singing in youth and adult choirs; supporting with leadership for children choirs and music; playing music in praise band; participating in skits for worship services
- Other possibilities, inside and outside the church: creating skits or plays for youth and other church activities; creating space for visual arts to be part of the church in public space; liturgical dance; Participation in music, dance and other art activities in the community and outside the church; exploring jobs and experiences related to music ministry and many different aspects of the arts
- o Your own ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **4. Evangelism**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- Existing: offering devotions or sermons for fellow youth and church at large; sharing your faith (in words and actions) with people you meet in a non-proselytizing way; sharing your story in worship
- Other possibilities, inside and outside the church: coming up with creative ways to tell/show the story of FUMC and the holy work God is up to here; exploring jobs and experiences related to preaching, promoting/sharing

- Your own ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **5. Faith**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: Pastoral care ministries (visiting the sick and homebound), grief support, walking alongside youth and friends who are struggling
- o Other possibilities, inside and outside the church: similar to above; also, capturing stories of how people in your church know or love God. Other ways to practice this gift include practicing compassion for yourself and others, especially during hard times; walking alongside family, friends, or others in their journeys; tending to your own spiritual life (what feeds your soul?); exploring jobs related to chaplaincy
- o Your own ideas
- o Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **6. Generosity**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: stewardship and monthly giving; learning about how church giving works and how the budget is made (perhaps serving on finance team to learn more about it); encouraging friends and church community to give to a mission or cause in the church or Conway/AR community (e.g. during worship); giving of your time and energy to a project or cause
- o Other possibilities, both inside and outside the church: giving your time and energy inside and outside the church; exploring jobs or experiences related to giving of time and money and making your neighborhood better
- o Your own ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **7. Healing**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: pastoral care; visiting the sick and walking alongside those in pain
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: helping starting a healing-oriented worship service where folks can come forward to receive special prayers (possibly be anointed with oil); coordinating visits with your friends to support a friend or family member who's sick or

going through something difficult; exploring jobs or experiences related to physical or emotional healing. Other ways to practice this gift include effective listening, and learning and practicing offering a kind word or touch to others.

- o Your own ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **8. Helping**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: helping with anything going on inside and outside the church, especially if it's behind the scenes; helping with homebound (e.g. taking Communion to them); putting together newsletters, cards; helping with fellowship events at youth or church (set-up, tear-down, food & hospitality); greeting people at worship; volunteering in the office
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: Helpers are quick to jump in, see what needs doing, and does it. They are the backbone of any community! Their gifts can be used in so many ways and in so many types of jobs and experiences.
- o What are your ideas?

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **9. Studying the Bible**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: current Bible studies or small groups going on in youth or in the church
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: connecting experiences in youth and church to scripture; making time for your own study of scripture; exploring experiences and jobs that allow you to dive more deeply into understanding scripture and how it connects to our contexts today
- o What are your ideas?

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## **10. Motivational Leadership**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: serving on leadership team in youth; encouraging others to join a team or a project with your vision; teaching Sunday school
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: developing a vision for a new ministry and inviting others to be apart; preaching and leading worship; creating spaces for people to tell their

stories; exploring jobs or experiences related to preaching, creating a vision, leading in worship or the life of the church

- o What are your ideas?

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

### **11. Mercy and Compassion**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: pastoral care; mission and outreach; justice ministries
- o Possibilities inside and outside the church: practicing your gifts for listening nonjudgementally, for serving others, especially who are struggling or suffering; inviting folks on the margins to not only be part of the church, but to offer their gifts and leadership. Explore jobs or experiences that let you connect what you feel in your heart to what you see in the world (pastoring, counseling, social work, etc.) Mercy and compassion are the heart and root of a lot of ministry, and they keep the church connected to who's on the margins, who is overlooked, who needs a community of support.
- o What are your ideas for how you practice this gift?

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

### **12. Nurturing Others' Growth**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: small groups in youth and church at large; facilitating small groups; discipleship; supporting new members of church in their faith walk and in inviting them to be part of things
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: creating groups or communities of support over a long period of time (could be an activity you do regularly, like a sport or another activity); creating or exploring experiences or jobs that focus on spiritual formation (how one cultivates and grows their own relationship with God and faith)
- o Your ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

### **13. Prophecy**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: Forum class, ministries that are outreach or justice-oriented

- o Possibilities both inside and outside the church: calling peers and friends back to the mission of the church, and the gospel of love and peace; connecting youth group/church to a broader reality or issue in society; developing awareness of social justice issues and keeping them at the forefront of people's minds; talking about issues that are important to you with friends or exploring them in school projects
- o Your ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

#### **14. Teaching**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: teaching other children and youth at the church; leading Bible studies or other small groups at church or in ACCYM activities
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: creating or coordinating a "skill share" where friends, family or church community can share talents and gifts with one another (one person teaches how to sew, one teaches how to write a poem, etc.); exploring jobs and experiences that let you
- o Your ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

#### **15. Encouragement**

Ministries to learn about or get connected to

- o Existing: highlighting the spiritual gifts and qualities you see in others through small groups, worship leadership (liturgy, music, etc.), and in the church overall
- o Other possibilities inside and outside the church: connecting with literal neighbors outside the church and asking about their gifts and ways they can be shared; exploring jobs or experiences that are people-focused, and that remind people of their unique gifts and qualities
- o Your ideas

Who is someone you know in your life or here at church who exemplifies this gift who you can reach out to?

## Decision-Making From the Soul Steps

1. On one of your sheets of paper, draw a picture of your life: the things most important to you, the activities you do regularly, the people and communities you're a part of, your favorite memories, who God is to you, etc. Feel free to use pictures and words.
2. Spend a couple minutes in silence and think about a decision you need to make soon, or one that you made recently and are wondering if it was the right one. It could be related to any number of things, including:
  - Activities or ministries to be part of in the church, based on the spiritual gifts inventory and conversations you've had about It
  - Relationships with peers, friends, family
  - Academic or social activities
3. When you've chosen a decision you want to reflect on, draw four quadrants (draw a line going vertically and a line through it going horizontally) on your second sheet of paper. Label them 1) body, 2) reason, 3) gifts, 4) faith identity.
4. Consider how the decision you are making is connected to each of those four areas. Write down any words, phrases, or images on your paper.

**Body:** How does it physically feel in your body to either make the decision or not? Do you notice any clenching, tightness, or a feeling of relief or freedom in any parts of your body? If it helps, stand up and imagine that you are physically present in the moment that you are reflecting on.

**Reason:** How is your logic and mind making sense of this decision? Tools that might be helpful here are thinking about practical concerns (financial, geographical, time), or making a pro/con list.

**Gifts:** Think back to the spiritual gifts inventory we took together or one you took in the past, or about gifts or skills that you've identified in yourself or from others. How does this decision use or not use your gifts? Is that important to you in this decision? If you need a refresher on what your spiritual gifts might be, see pages 5-13 of the inventory.

**Faith Identity:** This is the most important aspect of this exercise in terms of decision-making as a Christian. How do you experience God as you reflect on this decision? What might God have to say about it? Where do you feel God nudging, challenging, or supporting you? What scriptures or past faith experiences help you as you think about this decision?