

Growing Apostles

Changing One Life at a Time

A strategy for developing disciples who develop disciples who..

2011 Edition: Editor - Tom Kerr



Growing Apostles

Was originally an initiative of the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit,
a branch of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod
acknowledgements

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Bible verses quoted in **Growing Apostles** are from New International Version.
Selected quotations from The Message. Eugene Peterson. Nav Press: Colorado, 1993.

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1. What is **Growing Apostles**?

Growing Apostles aims to help committed Christians learn to

- * love God more deeply,
- * love others more authentically
- * live a life of service and mission,
- * participate as energised members of the Body of Christ,
- * rely on the Holy Spirit to nourish and empower us
- * be more Christ like
- * and to invite and support others on the journey of discipleship as well

Our hope with Growing Apostles is to move ourselves

beyond a muted, grey scaled, individualistic, selfish and secret faith, to one that is so *vibrant, colourful, engaged, responsive and contagious*, that we are experiencing **life in all it's fullness** and that we naturally want to offer this faith life to others.

Growing Apostles is about discipleship firstly, and then beyond that, developing our own spiritual lives so that we can become Apostles.

Disciples who develop disciples who develop disciples. Multiplication!

An Apostle is principally one who is sent. All who have entered into a relationship with God, are sent to tell others about God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Growing Apostles** is a supported journey of discovery. Discovering our call, growing our understanding and faith, and in response to God's faithfulness, sharing and teaching, loving, and supporting others to come upon the journey, so they too can have "Life to the Max", in God. (John 10:10)

Matthew 28 the Great Commission *The Message*

¹⁷ *The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally.*

¹⁸⁻²⁰ *Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the*



age."

The Church's role in Growing Apostles

Growing Apostles requires commitment. It will have the most powerful effect when a church or Youth Ministry is committed, long term, to develop disciples who will develop other disciples. The Church will have to think this G.A. framework through, devise their own faith formation systems, gather resources, follow their plans, revise and evaluate, refresh and continue on with the intentions.

You see how this is different from providing a youth ministry where the young people only play games in the church hall, go on socials and show up to watch the worship band rock out at Church?

It requires commitment to support, direct, resource and cheer on every individual young person as they go on their version of the adventure. It also requires us to grow with them, to walk the walk together. Do as we do. Discipleship is an outcome of the church "being" and "doing" what the Gospel calls it to. Much of what the church does, is and must be for the sake of 'the other'. As we learn to grow and equip ourselves, we also learn to grow and equip others, who in turn learn how to as well.

Discipleship is a life long process and when our church has taught us the skills required to keep, grow and share the faith, those tools will be used over and over again, where ever we travel in this world.

Discipleship is also a practical process. It requires action as well as theological reflection. The original disciples still had so much to learn when Jesus commissioned them to go into the world to carry on his work. It's a living out kind of challenge! But Jesus remains with his disciples "always" and the inspiration, help and empowerment of Holy Spirit is a promised gift. Spiritual input and practical output must fuel each other. On this journey we must ensure we are sustained and fed by the Word of God, the work of the Spirit, interaction with the faith family, and the experiencing of God's love.

The input – output balance is addressed by the 7 Soulfood groups.

A ministry to young people must design experiences both in Christian Education and Christ Like Praxis.

Growing Apostles uses the concept of 7 "*soul food*" groups. With a balanced diet from the different *Soul Food Groups*, you will be better equipped for mission, service and ministry and better equipped to help others keep the faith too.

Growing Together – A Whole Church challenge and Blessing

Let's consider these 2 facets now – your personal faith formation and the inspiration you are to others in their faith formation.

We ourselves (as Apostles and Disciples) must be growing and developing our relationship with God. Only from that place, can we effectively share the faith journey with others and encourage them in their explorations.



- A significant quantity of the material in the Growing Apostles framework is offered to help you develop, as you walk your own personal faith journey. Research proves that the young people most likely to read the Bible, for example, have people that are important to them reading the Bible and talking with them about it. When family, friends, mentors, role models, church leaders and youth ministry leaders are living the faith, setting the examples, striving to engage in the 7 key soul food areas, talking it up, they are enriching the faith environment soil in which seeds of faith can take root and flourish.

Faith is caught not taught. Have a faith worth emulating! Have a faith that fulfils you!

- On your journey you need to be sustained in a balanced way. The spiritual disciplines provided in Growing Apostles offer experiential learning, growth and nourishment in the ways of each of the areas of faith. We provide a Fridge full of spiritual soul food.
- As we journey forward in our relationship with God we will develop, and become proficient in support of other sojourners on their spiritual journey with God, simply by sharing what we are doing, trying, struggling with and enjoying in our faith practices.
- Never underestimate how little you will grow if you do not feed yourself. You simply can't run on empty.
- Never underestimate how little you will influence and inspire others if you are not being influenced and inspired. You can't give what you haven't got. And you can't model what you don't exemplify.
- As young people model their faith on what people who are "significant others" in their life do, (and what they perceive is done), your part as a role model is vitally important.
- There is a spiritual malnourishment epidemic in western culture. Perhaps even in our churches. A good, healthy, balanced diet of faith practises is needed.
- **Growing Apostles** requires appropriately feeding the spirituality of the young people you minister with. And yourself!

The 7 Soul Food Groups

These are the seven characteristics identified as signs of 'mature faith'. Section 3 looks at them in significant detail and the background to how we arrived with these seven and why. To list them in an introductory way only – and there is no specific or hierarchical order to them, they are all part of a balance and growing spiritual life.....

- Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service
- Enjoying intimate relationship with God
- Passionately seeking Christ-like character
- Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Cultivating authentic and Healthy relationships



- Belonging and participating in a community of faith
- Actively engaged in mission.

Now is the time to become “Apostles who grow Apostles”. Apostles who have a concern for their own spiritual wellbeing, and who are willing and prepared to live the gospel through “head, heart and hand” for the sake of other’s spirituality.

You are going to have to trust God. God has been faithful and God yearns to be part of the ministry we do. It is now time to stop playing games, to quit just providing entertainment in the guise of youth ministry and to stop making excuses. It is time to get serious about our faith and the faith of the young people with minister with.

Research undertaken by “Exemplary Youth Ministry” lists 34 observable criteria which represent evidence of mature faith by youth. Of those 34 criteria identified, 9 of them (which is over 1/4) relate specifically to young people being able to articulate in words their faith. But we aren’t very good at that. (See National Church Life Surveys). Our declining church demographics prove this.

So let us be challenged to add our **mouths** as well as our **hands** as we approach this ministry. Let us be Christians who know what we believe and how we experience God, and let us be able to express our faith not only in actions but also in words. As Apostles we need to get serious about the “Great Commission” and we need to instruct and train others in the ways of God. Let us learn how to freely and confidently tell others who God is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and what God wants for and from us.

Growing Apostles is not a program to keep your Youth Group going well, it is designed to fill the spiritual yearnings of Young People and their leaders and peers, by feeding them **Soul Food**. It’s an approach that invites us to be authentic and intentional about their relationship with God. Old School - the New Cool! Faith works! Let’s move forward by going back to it! Rediscovering God!

For some people this will actually be radical, for some churches this will be radical, for Jesus who was the most radical of all, it isn’t radical, it is what he has asked us to do.

Let’s grow together in God



2. Why do we need to **Grow Apostles?**

Because too many of us, (young and older alike) are not experiencing the joy of God, the fruits of the Spirit and the wonderful companionship of Jesus.

We're missing out! Life in all it's fullness is passing us by and we are just stuck in routine faith patterns or worse still, totally enculturated by our secular society. True? Or False?

And so we (young and old alike – but particularly our young) drift.....off.....away..... the faith plant withers....and then..

As people who care for one another, it is important to be intentional in the way we help, (particularly but not exclusively), young people grow as Disciples of Christ.

Having 'spiritual highs' on youth camps, in the special youth service, etc is great. Seriously! Let's also focus on long-term spiritual growth and intentionally structure our youth ministry for that.

Asking the question –

“What do we want a mature Christian young person to be like?”

is an integral part of the **Growing Apostles** approach? This has lead us to want to help individuals and congregations create an environment where young people are fed spiritually, grow in the Christian faith, and become missional in their day-to-day context.

Growing Apostles is an approach to youth ministry rather than a program to be implemented. It's not a complete package we can give you. It will take your time, effort, thought, prayer, devotion to God and seeking God's call on your life and on the lives of the young people you minister to, to devise your own way of building on the Growing Apostles framework in your context.

Results from the National Church Life Survey would indicate that over the last few decades the church has not been effective in helping young people grow as long-term Disciples of Christ. **Growing Apostles – changing one life at a time** offers your congregation an approach where young people can grow as Disciples of Christ and be equipped for the ministry to which God calls them.



The faith plant can be **rejuvenated!!!**

Reflect back over the effectiveness of your church's ministry with young people.

What has it done well? What does it need to do differently into the future?

Young people, (the committed ones, not just those visiting for entertainment) – are you keeping them or losing them? Why?

Growing Apostles suggests that

- Regardless of whether a church has one or one hundred young people, it needs to be intentional and strategic in how it helps all people grow and develop in faith.
- why not focus on that which really matters, rather than organizing night after night of games for young people, when the Church Council has actually entrusted you to lead them in the way of Christ?

This is what one young person said about the change to the **Growing Apostles** approach in ministry in his church. (Queensland 2006)

"I've been going to church all my life but never really connected properly with God until our small group started. It wasn't like youth group where you went and had fun then 5 minutes of God at the end. This was like full on God and a bit of fun along the way. It took a while for everyone to open up but we all did eventually. I used to think youth group was just about fun and games but when I want fun I can go out to my friends. When I want God I go to my small group." (Josh, 14)

What would a young person from your church say about how you have helped them to grow in their faith? (Have a guess or ask some of them)



Growing Apostles from a Biblical Perspective

Our calling is to create an environment where young people can grow spiritually as Disciples of Christ. Young people are then able to ‘GO’ into the world and turn the world upside down for Jesus, but there is some building and cultivating to do.

One passage of Scripture that informs the **Growing Apostles** approach is *The Wise and Foolish Men* - Matthew 7:24-27. In this passage Jesus talks about two men, the first man hears Jesus’ words and puts them into action. He has created a rock solid base for his life. When life gets really difficult, the wise man is still standing. The second man listens but fails to put Jesus’ words into action. When the storms of life arrive, he falls, collapses.

This passage instructs us as people in youth ministry, to proclaim the Word of God and provide opportunities for young people to live out their faith. It is only when we do this that we assist young people to have a solid base for their faith and life. It is our responsibility to ensure, as much as possible, that young people are able to build their life on solid rock, not shifting sand.

The Parable of the Sower— (Matthew 13: 3-9, 18-23) helps us to get our perspective right in looking at our ministry with young people, by posing two questions:

A frequent comment regarding this Parable in relation to youth ministry is -

“our job is just to plant the seed and God will do the rest”.

This is actually a misinterpretation of the Parable. If however we see God as the Sower of the seed, and the seed as the Living Word - Jesus, the implication for people involved in youth ministry is quite profound. We are forced to ask questions like –

“What is our involvement then if we are not the seed sower?”

“What type of ground are we going to help cultivate in young people’s lives to receive the Living Word?” “How do we provide a faith yielding environment?”

If we only provide a short devotional time each week in our ministry with young people, then spend the rest of the time playing games – or if we only do social justice programs with no faith talk

“How will that help support the seeds with what they need to put down deep roots into young peoples’ lives and souls?”

If we don't intentionally help young people grow Spiritually, the living Word will soon be choked out by other things that take priority in busy, distracted lives.

1. What sort of ground are we providing young people for discipleship?

2. If the Living Word of God requires nutritious soil to produce results, how are we enriching the soil? What are we doing to provide the right environment for faith to grow and multiply?

3. Is there a difference between our whole church's capacities for discipleship growth and our Youth Ministries capacities? Are they experiencing several soils as they journey with us, hard soil, bitter soil, good soil, no soil — just rock? Are parts of our church life inviting death and parts inviting life? If so, how can we make the whole church a hot house for growth?



Growing Apostles requires cultivating conducive environments.

By being intentional and strategic about helping young people grow as disciples, we are helping cultivate this healthy soil. Good seed, good soil, good environment, good care, good results!

I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. John 15:16

Another passage which underpins why we believe in the **Growing Apostles** approach is 1 Timothy 4:12. The Church in general underestimates young people and their interest in exploring faith and life, and especially their ability to be Apostles. By perpetuating the myth that young people are not interested in or capable of studying the Bible, are not yet ready for ministry and mission, what we live out as a church is a denial of what the scriptures tell us and it is leaving many of our churches empty.

Are the young people in your church studying the Bible? Are they learning to pray? Are they given practise at serving and are they empowered to use their gifts? What steps are you taking to help them?

Let's be positive, proactive, creative and non-apologetic about our faith and the nurture of faith in others.

People talk about the “fun stuff” and “devotions” or “bible study” separately, as if you can't study the Living Word and have fun at the same time. Young people are searching for meaning, and will often surprise us with the deep things of life and faith they enjoy exploring - if we give them a chance. Let's follow Paul's example from the scriptures and take the art of sharing ministry with young people and



mentoring them seriously. They will learn from us and in turn mentor others. Hence Disciples become Apostles, and as Apostles set the example new disciples are born and the cycle multiplies.

What is an Apostle in your own words?

Are you an Apostle? Could you dare to be? Would you call young people to be?

**Are you capable of discipling a young person to a point of Christian maturity?
If not what steps might you take to become capable?**

Is the young person who is serious about following Jesus, being given the attention and ministry they deserve, or are they neglected while we keep trying to attract new young people?



3. Growing Apostles Theory

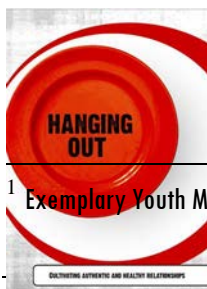
This section looks at where **Growing Apostles** came from and how we arrived at this approach. In this section you will see clearly how the 7 Soul Food Groups (or characteristics) interface as accurate and sufficient evidence of a mature faith. This involves asking and answering such questions as: Have we missed something critical? Do the 7 soul food groups adequately represent the scope of a mature faith? And upon what basis have we determined them?

Perhaps it is best to begin such a task by being up front about the difficulty of defining the “dynamic power of a God of grace at work through the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of diverse persons and communities” (EYM¹ report). There will always be some measure of difference of opinion between Christians as to what constitutes mature faith for reasons of varying theological perspectives and the diversity of cultural expression. We may also add the fact that youth ministry is age-specific, and thus our expectations of what indicates a mature faith may well change depending upon the age of the persons in question.

For these reasons we have taken a rather “broad-brushstroke” approach in defining the 7 **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups. This means we have outlined what we believe to be the key areas of discipleship whilst avoiding being overly prescriptive about the practices one might employ in the day to day living out of each characteristic. The 7 Soul Food Groups are:



GOD AND I: enjoying an intimate relationship with God
Love God



HANGING OUT: cultivating healthy and authentic relationships

¹ Exemplary Youth Ministry

Love Others



SERVING OTHERS: using gifts and abilities in a life of sacrificial service

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink..



DOING CHURCH: belonging to and participating in a community of faith

You are the Body of Christ



LIVING LIFE: being sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit

I will send you a Helper, the Holy Spirit..



ON A MISSION: actively engaging in mission

Go in to all the world..
I have come to set free the oppressed, to
give sight to the blind..



WHO I AM: developing a Christ-like character

We can find these seven food groups in Jesus' spiritual diet.

Jesus spent quality time alone with God and enjoyed an intimate relationship with God.

See Matthew 14:22–23.

He developed his spectacularly wonderful character.

Luke 3:52.

Jesus loved his community of followers.

John 15:34–35.

He lived a life of sacrificial service in so many ways.

Matthew 14:13–21.

His relationships were authentic and healthy, caring and honest.

Matthew 9:9–13.

Jesus was actively engaged in mission.

Matthew 5:1.

Jesus Christ used his extraordinary gifts and abilities to bless others.

Matthew 16:29–39.

Jesus made sure he was sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:16–17.

Instead of a linear or cyclical understanding of the process of spiritual growth, **Growing Apostles** is seen more as a diet. The need to eat a balanced diet is important to one's physical wellbeing. In a similar way the need to have a balanced spiritual life and to keep it in balance is paramount to maturity in faith. The next section will look at this in more detail, while this section will explain how we arrived at the 7 or Soul Food Groups.

It is important at this stage to outline clearly what the **7 Soul Food Groups** are and what they are **not**.

The 7 Soul Food Groups are **NOT**

- The 7 Soul Food Groups in and of themselves are *not* a paradigm for youth ministry.
- They do not dictate the actual content of your youth ministry or personal spiritual and devotional life,
- Nor do they dictate how you might implement such content or how you may structure and run a ministry.

Instead, the 7 Soul Food Groups **ARE about**

- Providing a conceptual framework for the scope of the areas of growth one will visit throughout one's discipleship journey.
- Providing a concept you can design your youth ministry around — or whole church ministry!
- They *are about* articulating what we might expect life to look like for someone who possesses a mature or vital faith.
- They *are about* helping people to grasp the core biblical business in living and walking with God.

As part of the wider **Growing Apostles** project we make some suggestions about how you might like to tackle structuring and running your youth ministry, as well as practices you might like to try in living out each of the 7 Soul Food groups.

The Fridge can be a helpful tool as you structure your own Spiritual life and there are some tools in this manual to help you shape your Church's ministry.

So how did we go about developing the 7 Soul Food Groups?

A number of sources and a significant amount of research have contributed to our selection and definition of the 7 Soul Food Groups. We have referred to the work and writings of Ken Moser, Thomas Bandy, Kenda Creasy Dean, Doug Foster, Merton P. Strommen, Richard Hardel, and Doug Fields. We also drew on the experience that the YACMU team and Exemplary Youth Ministry principles.

Here is how some of the thinking and writing of the above mentioned people have contributed to the Growing Apostles project.

1. Bandy

In his work, Thomas Bandy compares a 'declining church' to that of a 'thriving church'. Bandy suggests that the declining church is all about 'belonging' and maintaining the institution. However the thriving church is all about lives being changed and this takes place through spiritual growth. A high importance is placed on small groups. The table below outlines how the 7 Soul Food Groups interact with Bandy's ingredients for a thriving church.

Growing Apostles 7 Soul Food Groups	Bandy's Ingredients for a Thriving Church
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God. Belonging and participating in a community of faith.	Changed (Experiencing God)
Passionately seeking Christ-like character. Cultivating authentic and healthy relationships.	Gifted (Growing in God)
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God. Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a lifestyle of sacrificial service.	Called (Listening to God)
Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit.	Equipped (Serving God)
Actively engaged in mission	Sent (Sharing God)

Bandy advocates that for a person to be changed, gifted, called, equipped and sent, he or she must be growing spiritually. It is a person's ongoing experience of God which transforms their heart and lifestyles. This ongoing experience and growth is what enables them to discover their own unique gifts, be equipped and be sent as apostles to share God's living Word in various ways. Bandy argues that our job is to help people identify their gifts and passions and provide opportunities for them to be involved in ministry. Not asking people to fill certain positions if it is not their passion. For a person to reach the stage to share God, they must grow spiritually. This is at the heart of a thriving church which is able to reach out in many ways to its local community.

2. Ken Moser: Effective Youth Ministry

Ken's focus on intentional discipleship and growing young people in their faith has greatly influenced 'Growing Apostles'. We have been challenged by Ken's books and journal articles. Ken is very upfront with his belief that we must move away from just entertaining kids on a Friday night to that of equipping young people for their own ministry. Ken suggests that we often neglect the young people God has blessed us with for the sake of the outsider. He argues that we need to equip our young people as disciples so they can reach the outsider, as they already have their social networks. Ken's conviction that we need to get back to basics as our core business is shared in the G.A. approach.

3. YACMU

As a team YACMU has contributed significantly, with many dedicated years of professional ministry experience both individual and collectively. With this vast experience in full time Youth, Children and Family ministry, days were spent work-shopping and discussing spiritual journeys of self and others. This involved input from people of diverse ages, educational and theological backgrounds. Much soul searching was done by individual staff in asking what was important in the life of the Church at this time. We were able to notice commonalities in the scope of our experiences and achieve consensus in defining the many facets of mature faith and exploring how they tied to what others have written and researched.

4. Kenda Creasy Dean

Kenda Creasy Dean speaks on the trend away from entertainment based youth ministry, in favour of focusing on the Bible and theology — pastoring rather than running programs, providing ministry experience opportunities that invite youth to be *agents* of ministry alongside their leaders rather than seeing youth as *objects* of ministry. She believes youth ministry is about being intentional in the faith formation of youth, not just hoping they will read it between the lines or pick it up along the way.

5. Foster (Renovaré)

Richard Foster is a leading advocate of the Spiritual Formation movement. More fully expounded in his book *Streams of Living Water*, Foster seeks in the spiritual formation movement to facilitate the process of spiritual growth by formalizing its components into 6 dimensions of faith and practice. According to Foster, these dimensions define Christian tradition and comprise our foundational beliefs and are essential to growth and spiritual maturity. The dimensions he categorises are:

- Contemplative: The Prayer-Filled Life
- Holiness: The Virtuous Life
- Charismatic: The Spirit-Empowered Life
- Social Justice: The Compassionate Life
- Evangelical: The Word-Centered Life
- Incarnational: The Sacramental Life

Foster’s six dimensions of faith and practice fit with the 7 Growing Apostles Soul Food Groups

Growing Apostles 7 Soul Food Groups	Foster’s Six Dimensions of Faith and Practice
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God	Contemplative: The Prayer-Filled Life
Passionately seeking Christ-like character	Holiness: The Virtuous Life Evangelical: The Word-Centered Life
Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit	Charismatic: The Spirit-Empowered Life
Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service	Charismatic: The Spirit-Empowered Life Social Justice: The Compassionate Life
Belonging and participating in a community of faith	Evangelical: The Word-Centered Life Incarnational: The Sacramental Life
Actively engaged in mission	Social Justice: The Compassionate Life
Cultivating authentic and Healthy relationships	Holiness: The Virtuous Life

Foster also picks up on the notion of “Covenant”, which is a significant part of the spiritual formation movement. **Growing Apostles** draws on the idea of a “Covenant” in so far as it demands commitment for Congregations to take it on and to stick with it long term.

Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel

Strommen and Hardel call for a paradigm shift in youth and children’s ministry. They believe that the current paradigm for passing on the faith conveys the impression that faith is nurtured only in



the church building resulting in an institutionalization of Christianity. Instead, they suggest a paradigm that results in a more comprehensive approach and fosters faith through experiences in the family, the congregation, the community and the culture. They determined Ten Characteristics that mark a life of commitment to Jesus Christ and a life of witness and service:

1. Trusting in a personal Christ
2. Understanding grace and living in grace
3. Communing with God regularly
4. Demonstrating moral responsibility
5. Accepting responsibility in a congregation
6. Demonstrating unprejudiced and loving lives
7. Accepting authority and being personally responsible
8. Having hopeful and positive attitudes
9. Participating in the rituals of Christian community
10. Engaging in mission and service

The approach of Strommen and Hardel gives great ideas on how to structure a youth and children's ministry. Here's how their 10 characteristics fit with our 7 Characteristics in Growing Apostles:

Growing Apostles 7 Soul Food Groups	Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel Ten Characteristics that mark a life of commitment to Jesus Christ and a life of witness and service:
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God	Communing with God regularly Trusting in a personal Christ
Passionately seeking Christ-like character	Demonstrating moral responsibility Accepting authority and being personally responsible Having a hopeful and positive attitude
Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit	Understanding grace and living in grace
Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service	Engaging in mission and service
Belonging and participating in a community of faith	Participating in the rituals of Christian community Accepting responsibility in a congregation
Actively engaged in mission	Engaging in mission and service
Cultivating authentic and Healthy relationships	Demonstrating unprejudiced and loving lives



6. Exemplary Youth Ministry

The Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry was conducted with a view to discovering the “secret” of successful youth ministries. While most denominations are experiencing a drop in the percentage of youth, families and young adults participating in their congregations, there are flourishing exceptions to this trend across the board. The EYM study was designed: “To identify congregations that consistently establish faith as a vital factor in the lives of their youth and young adults, to discover what accounts for their effective approach to ministry, and to make the results widely available for the benefit of other congregations.” Employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, a large and diverse sample of 131 congregations across 7 denominations were surveyed, and of these 21 congregations (3 of varying size from each denomination) were studied in depth.

The study’s advisory council determined that Christian congregations across the seven denominations who were doing effective youth ministry could be best identified by utilizing already existing criteria that had proved their validity. They developed a 34 item, 7 cluster description of “mature Christian faith” in youth, of which most items were drawn from previous national (American) studies sampling thousands of people: *Five Crises of Youth and Effective Christian Education*. The use of these criteria also allows comparisons between youth in this study and those of historical studies.

The seven cluster description of mature Christian faith in youth is as follows:

- Seek Spiritual Growth, Both Alone and With Others;
- Believe God is Present in the World;
- Act Out of a Commitment of Faith;
- Are Active with God’s People;
- Possess a Positive, Hopeful Spirit;
- Live Out a Life of Service;
- Live a Christian Moral Life.

The seven cluster description relates to the 7 **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups as follows in the diagram below. Whilst similar in many respects to the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups, the seven cluster description fails to directly address the characteristic of “Cultivating authentic and healthy relationships” which we believe to be an essential component a mature faith.



Growing Apostles 7 Soul Food Groups	Exemplary Youth Ministry 7 Clusters
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God	Believe God is Present in the World;
Passionately seeking Christ-like character	Seek Spiritual Growth, Both Alone and With Others; Live a Christian Moral Life; Act Out of a Commitment of Faith
Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit	Possess a Positive, Hopeful Spirit; Seek Spiritual Growth, Both Alone and With Others
Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service	Live Out a Life of Service;
Belonging and participating in a community of faith	Are Active with God's People;
Actively engaged in mission	Act Out of a Commitment of Faith;
Cultivating authentic and Healthy relationships	

As part of the Exemplary Youth Ministry data collection, a self-report survey was conducted in which the participating youth told of the differing aspects of faith they associate with being a committed Christian. Parents, adult youth workers as well as pastors and youth ministers were also surveyed and identified seven aspects of faith in these youth. While the aspects identified by the parents and leaders are useful insofar as they confirm the youth to be of vital faith, the data gathered from the youth themselves is of particular interest to us in the **Growing Apostles** project. This is because it provides us with some insight into what youth consider as important in growing with God. They outlined 12 aspects:

- A Personal Christianity
- Moral Responsibility
- Defends and Supports Friends
- Faith Maturity
- A Personal Religiousness
- Moral Integrity
- Seeks Spiritual Growth
- God Consciousness
- Lives a Life of Service



- Speaks Publicly About Ones Faith
- Private Religious Study
- Considers a Religious Vocation

Perhaps most encouraging is their statement that a committed Christian seeks spiritual growth – an indication that the whole idea of “**Growing Apostles**” is already amenable to young people’s concept of being a Christian. In seeing how the youth analysis stacks up against the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups (see visual diagram below), it is interesting to note that youth failed to mention any aspects of a mature Christian faith which fall under the “Belonging and Participating in a Community of Faith” category. Very interesting!

Growing Apostles	Exemplary Youth Ministry
7 Soul Food Groups	12 Aspects as Identified by Young People
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God	A Personal Religiousness God Consciousness A Personal Christianity
Passionately seeking Christ-like character	Moral Responsibility Moral Integrity Seeks Spiritual Growth Private Religious Study
Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit	Faith Maturity Private Religious Study Seeks Spiritual Growth
Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service	Lives a Life of Service Considers a Religious Vocation
Belonging and participating in a community of faith	
Actively engaged in mission	Speaks Publicly About Ones Faith
Cultivating authentic and Healthy relationships	Defends and Supports Friends



a. Doug Fields — Purpose Driven Youth Ministry

Doug Fields is the face of the youth branch of the Purpose Driven movement. His Purpose Driven Youth Ministry and abundant supply of Simply Youth Ministry resources are all about nurturing youth of vital and mature faith and the leaders who work with them. Doug’s February 2006 blog which can be found on the Simply Youth Ministry site outlines clearly just what “Purpose Driven” youth ministry is and is not. Doug states that being “Purpose Driven” is about pursuing God’s biblical purposes (not your own) of Evangelism, Discipleship, Fellowship, Ministry and Worship. These five biblical purposes are not about merely having a purpose behind what you do, or doing things like Saddleback church. They are not about a formula for youth ministry or even about church growth. Instead they are about helping people to understand God’s design, plan and agenda for the corporate church and the individual believer. This is essentially about being spiritually healthy because God’s will for our lives and ministry becomes what we live out. Thus these biblical purposes form a paradigm for youth ministry as well as serve to provide the scope for the areas of growth one will explore in becoming a person of mature faith.

In terms of how these purposes relate to the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups one might argue that the whole **Growing Apostles** thing falls under the Discipleship purpose alone. Such a comment highlights confusion between the purposes as a paradigm for youth ministry and as the scope of the life of someone possessing a mature faith. While it is true that we call the *process* of becoming a mature believer “discipleship” and that this is a significant part of the focus of the **Growing Apostles** project, it is not what the 7 Soul Food Groups themselves are about. Let’s align them with Doug Fields five biblical purposes, describing God’s design, plan and agenda for the individual believer.

Growing Apostles 7 Soul Food Groups	Doug Fields 5 Purposes Driving Youth Ministry
Enjoying an intimate relationship with God	Worship
Passionately seeking Christ-like character	Discipleship
Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit	Overarching principle of spiritual health as life and ministry align with God’s agenda/biblical purposes
Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service	Ministry
Belonging and participating in a community of faith	Worship Fellowship
Actively engaged in mission	Evangelism



So by all means do further reading and research yourself, but basically the church at large is identifying that the way “we did” youth ministry is not going to take it too much further into the future.

There is plenty of real life data that supports moving from entertainment to relational ministry and solid faith development. **Growing Apostles** isn't just about Discipleship it's about living out the call to be a Disciple and the need to become Apostles; disciples who form disciples, who form disciples.

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4. What Are the 7 **Soul Food** Groups ?

To live a healthy lifestyle we are aware that we need to eat a well balanced diet and exercise. There are certain food groups that we need to consume in certain proportions to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle. Otherwise we can become overweight, malnourished, or underdeveloped. This is the same for spiritual growth. To grow as a disciple of Christ we need to ensure that we take in a well balanced spiritual diet and convert that energy into spiritual exercise and practise.

These are the '7 Essential Soul-Food Groups'

God and I	Enjoying an intimate relationship with God
Hanging Out	Cultivating healthy and authentic relationships
Serving Others	Using gifts and abilities in a life of sacrificial service
Doing Church	Belonging and participating in a community of faith
Living Life	Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit
On A Mission	Actively engaged in mission
Who I Am	Passionately developing a Christ-like character

This section of the book introduces and explores each soul-food group and how it relates to young people as **Growing Apostles**. When a young person is hungry they either go to **The Fridge** or pantry. In the case of '**Growing Apostles**', the image of **The Fridge** is used as a place where young people can go and be fed spiritually. **The Fridge** containing the 7 Soul-Food groups can be found in a variety of places. This includes youth group, small groups, a mentoring relationship, the home and young people taking responsibility for their own spiritual growth. This will be explored further in another section.

As we are intentional about discipleship and use the **Growing Apostles** approach, we need to keep focused on the big picture and ensure that our young people are receiving a balanced diet. For example, maybe we are providing experiences and resources for young people to enjoy an intimate relationship with God, however we forget the Soul-Food group, 'Actively engaged in Mission', and are not providing experiences in delivering outward expressions of God's love.

The 7 soul-food groups are not a program. It is up to each youth leadership team to ensure that young people are receiving the 7 Soul-Food groups from **The Fridge**. Then young people are more likely to experience that "life in all it's fullness" that Jesus yearns to give them.



SOUL-FOOD **God and I**

Enjoying an Intimate Relationship With God

Love God



Christian ministry needs to help young people know how to relate to God. Many people may have no idea how to spend time with God. Some may not even be aware that their relationship with God can develop in a rich and inexhaustible variety of ways.

Remember that the disciples had to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray too.

Giving people a range of ways to help them grow closer to God and encouraging them to enjoy God's company is a fantastic blessing.

We can intentionally design our ministry with young people to model a variety of ways to pray, to experiment with different spiritual disciplines, to develop spiritual habits of connecting with God through out their normal daily routines, to help them love God more and more over the passage of time. We need to give them the tools to build their relationship with God personally, with just them and God, as well as with in the context of a supportive Christian environment. It is a fact of ministry that some of the young people we come in contact with do not end up in the life of the church. Equipping them with ways to keep the faith through the wandering times is essential.

We can build into our ministry program, elements which will intentionally focus on deepening our relationship with God. Retreat days, guided meditation times, prayer patterns to use, stories, active ways to be with God, Bible study groups, spiritual directors or mentors, a strategy for reading and reflecting on the Bible, ways to engage all the senses in our spirituality, journaling approaches, personal devotional patterns, opportunities to swap stories with other Christians about how they

encounter God — all these and more we can provide to help our young people enjoy and love God more and more.

We'll know our ministry has been getting this right when we hear your young people say things like.. "I was having a good long chat to God the other day when..." or... " You know, I really love God!" or.. "God and I went surfing / did a painting / wrote a song yesterday."

What steps will you take to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities could you do with young people?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need?



SOUL-FOOD **Hanging Out**

Cultivating Authentic and Healthy Relationships

Love Others



We experience much of the world through our relationships. Whether or not we think the world is a good place will largely depend on our experience of relationships. Our faith in God is also experienced largely through our relationships with other people.

People can embody Christ for us. Or not.

We can be vessels that God's love flows through, outwards to others. Or not.

To be Christian we must stick up for those who are being given a raw deal, care for those who are hurting, challenge people to strive to be their best, bless people with a sense of being loved and do all these things in a way that Jesus might do them. Reflecting on how Jesus used a range of communication styles including confrontation, assertiveness, forgiveness, empathy etc can do a lot to help us realise that we are not called to be "nice" people, but rather strong people who are filled with compassion. Helping the people we minister to, develop authentic and a healthy relationship is a vital part of growing them in discipleship and towards apostleship.

A well rounded ministry to young people will help them learn how to express gratitude, give encouragement in natural and sincere ways, share honestly who they are with others — including sharing their faith, speak the truth in a spirit of love, risk honesty for the greater good of all — even when that means delivering tough love, set appropriate boundaries in relationships, and generally be real. We educate in the area of relationships by modelling it ourselves; setting up an environment where it is safe to say what you really think; calling people on any unhelpful attitudes, demonstrating sensitivity, dealing positively and frankly with conflict, providing training in relationship skills and so on.

We'll know our ministry has been helping people with authentic, healthy relationship skills when we hear them express compassion, pull each other up when they are being hurtful, apologise when they've blown it, give forgiveness, say "No" at the right times and "Yes" at the right times, when they can question things in a polite but real way and when they can share their faith comfortably and naturally with.

What steps are you taking to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities, experiences, methods, guidance could you provide for young people to help them enjoy an intimate relationship with God?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need for this?



SOUL-FOOD **Serving Others**

Using Gifts, Abilities and Talents in a Life of Sacrificial Service

Do for others what you would like them to do for you



Jesus, our hero, our God who came to us covered in human skin, master of the universe, Lord of lords and King of kings, gets down and dirty to serve us. He rolls his sleeves up, gets down on his knees and washes the dirt of his disciples' smelly feet as they come in doors to relax and share a meal together. A meal he is hosting. Host as servant. Master as slave. Jesus the servant leader. He sets us an example.

All God's children need each other. The world is a better place when people are prepared to help each other out. Service is a duty of love, especially for those of us who have Jesus as our role model.

Serving others is an integral part of the Christians life. It is an essential element in our spiritual nourishment.

We receive others service to us as a gift and sign of God's love and of their love too, if we have the mind to receive it in that way. When we serve others they too may experience God in that service. Then again, they may not. They don't have to. Our service does not come with a price tag that says, "Now that I have done this for you, you have to become a Christian." Service is sacrificial. It costs us something. It's not a trade.

Are we teaching our people about Jesus the servant leader? Are we serving them and showing how it can be done? In our ministry, providing opportunities to serve is a great way to help people become like Christ. Many people will testify that some of the most profound spiritual experiences they have had, have come through being involved in serving others, or in experience an amazing gift of grace when being served by others.

It can be a profound thing when a group of Christians build service in to their life together and into their interaction with others beyond the group. We can do a study on the parable of the sheep and the goats, and reflect on what it means to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, visit the lonely and those who are imprisoned, comfort the sick and so on. After our reflections, we can also join Rosies and visit young people in the Juvenile Detention Centres; offer to serve food to the homeless with a church program; work towards paying for a well in a third world country, do World Visions 40 Hour Famine or sponsor a child through Compassion; or hold a second hand clothing drive to give to Life Line or visit the elderly neighbours we have and help them out with that light bulb they can't reach or . . .

When the words, "Let me help you with that." are common place around our ministry, that's a great sign. When our people are saying about strangers in need, "Let's do something to help those people out.", we'll know our people are becoming like Jesus.

What steps will you take to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities could you do with young people?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need?



SOUL-FOOD **Doing Church**

Belonging and Participating in a Community of Faith

You are the body of Christ



“How excellent are the Lord’s faithful people. My greatest pleasure is to be with them.” Psalm 16 v 3

Isn’t it wonderful when it is an absolute pleasure to hang out with our faith community / church/ Christian group/ Christian mates! That’s how it ought to be hey! The church is about God’s children, enjoying their heavenly parent, having great times with their brothers and sisters of the faith and inviting others to belong in God’s family.

The church — the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. On a mission to live out Jesus love in the world and on the receiving end of that love themselves. Inviting others to the party is easy when it’s a great party to be at. This is how we want our people to experience life in the church.

Wont we be proud of our church when we bring a young person along for the first time and they are warmly welcomed before they even get in the door, they hear a message that relates to their lives, they experience the gospel as good news, they experience God in the service, traditions and rituals don’t get in the way of this experience or exclude them and make them feel like an outsider, the worship makes sense to them and by the end they know they have just been with God, liked what that meant to them and want more of it.

The church can be a fantastic place. It can be an environment where people are given opportunities to develop their talents and gifts in meaningful service both with in the church and with in the community. People can grow in to our best potentials through a vibrant church life.

We want our people to belong in the body of Christ. So does Jesus. We want them to be an active part of the body, being invited to, helped to, encouraged to and equipped to make their own special

contribution and then thanked for the service they offer. We want them to also be on the receiving end of the ministry that others in the church offer to them.

We have helped our people know what it means to be the church and to be “doing church” when they can find some one in the church they trust enough to confess their sins to and get help with managing their struggles; when they can remind others of Christ’s grace and help them apply it in their lives, when they call some one who’s been absent for a couple of weeks to see if they are going okay, when they dare to serve with out fear of criticism, when they welcome new comers and look after these people rather than just hanging out with their clique, when they are actively engaged in outreach, mission, ministry or service in the community in the name of the church and Jesus.

Being the church doesn’t come naturally. It takes education, training and practise to be a good part of a good church. Let’s make sure we are intentionally equipping people to be the church in our ministry.

What steps will you take to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities could you do with young people?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need?



SOUL-FOOD **Living Life**

Sustained, Recharged and Empowered by the Holy Spirit

I have sent you a Helper, the Holy Spirit..



Is Jesus still good news to us and our people? Does the gospel bring joy to our hearts or does it honestly feel more like a burden on our backs? Does the idea of following Jesus more closely energise us or depress us because it's all just so much hard work all the time?

If our spiritual diet is out of balance, we can get spiritually sick. Too much service, mission, work, challenge, striving, spiritual stress and strain is going to burn us out. We need to give careful attention to being sustained, recharged and empowered by God's Spirit. It's essential to have times of rest from all the striving and doing and being and just simply enjoy God from time to time. We need to be refuelled, blessed, fed, encouraged and built up by God's love ourselves. Even Jesus needed this.

The gospel is supposed to be good news for us. It has to bring us good things that we can appreciate, thrive on, be exhilarated by. This is not selfishness here, this is good stewardship. A person who loves being a Christian is a great advertisement for the faith. An energised disciple is likely to want to become an apostle. A person who is regularly experiencing God's love for them isn't likely to turn away from that relationship. This teaching is something we have to pass on to God's other children if we want them to keep the faith.

Stop. Revive. Survive the drive. It makes sense spiritually too.

So how do we do that ourselves and demonstrate this to others? We think about our priorities and build room in our time tables for regular, special dates with God, our beloved. We say "No!" to worthless, worldly, busy-ness and to those church activities which are useless too, so that we can be intentional about protecting our special times with God. We revisit the fact that Jesus is here for

US too. We learn how to open our hearts to receive from God. We experiment with ways to be with God to just enjoy the company. We tune our radars to pick up on the Holy Spirit's activity in our lives. We count our blessings and celebrate them. When we gather together we enjoy the fact that Jesus is there with us and we give him our attention. We also let him give us his attention! We swap stories with our mates about how good God has been to each of us and soak up the love that comes out in these stories. We develop the habits that will refill our tanks. We eat the food that will nourish us. That's when we will start to notice the fruit of the Spirit evident in our lives — not because we are working hard to be patient, peaceful, kind etc, but because the Holy Spirit has touched us deeply. The Holy Spirit has filled the well of our souls with living water and we are so blessed to the brim that it overflows out to others.

When we want to help, and we sense God's Spirit empowering us to help; when we are keen to tell others about our wonderful God, when we love to pray, when we look to God and can't help smiling with love, this is when we are living life in all it's fullness, just as Jesus promised us. These are signs that we are letting the Spirit sustain us.

What steps will you take to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities could you do with young people?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need?



SOUL-FOOD **On A Mission**

Actively Engaged in Mission

Go in to all the world...



As leaders in youth ministry or young adult ministry, it is our responsibility to ensure that teens and young adults are equipped, encouraged and provided opportunities to share the Good News of Christ in both word and action.

Young people have their own specific mission fields. These include schools, colleges, universities, their work places, sporting or recreation groups and their friendship networks, just to name a few. It is our role to build them up in the Word of God, the love of Jesus and the experience of the Holy Spirit alive with in them, so that they can reach out to their world with God's love.

Equipping people in this way achieves several profoundly important functions. Obviously, it ensures that the gospel can be shared to their peer group, who more than ever, are not in contact with the church. A person sharing their faith with their friends and acquaintances is the ultimate way for the faith to spread. It fulfils the great commission. It also fulfils peoples' lives. The good news is a gift we offer to people which will provide the richest life blessings available. We are doing them a favour! We're doing God a favour too because God desperately wants people to experience his love. We're also doing ourselves a favour, because we need to be on a mission!

We need to have a sense of purpose in our lives and that we are doing some thing important and worthwhile. Being on mission fulfils our destiny, our potentials, our spiritual lives and our calling.

In our ministry we can provide times for speaking together about our beliefs, practising talking freely about faith; modelling an easy going approach to talking about what Jesus means to us, or how we experience God. We can set up opportunities for young people to be engaged in mission through

Children's ministry, peer ministry, social justice programs, service projects motivated by Christ like compassion, outreach challenges, reconciliation and harmony actions, protest movements and so on.

We'll see the fruits of our labours in this area when young people's friends start arriving at church with them because they have become Christians through the inspiration they find in their friends faith. We'll know that our people have got the message when they are keen to take up opportunities in outreach ministries or community service projects. We'll also know that they have the point when they say "No" to some church work because they need to be witnessing to their friends on that occasion. When our people come to us with a concern about a group of people in the community, or the global village, saying that God has been putting these people on their hearts and wondering how the church might get alongside these people, we'll know that they understand that Christians are called to be on mission with God. When they talk about their personal ministry at work/uni/school/ with their friendship group it will demonstrate an understanding that mission is about everyday relationships too.

What steps will you take to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities could you do with young people?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need?



SOUL-FOOD **Who I Am**

Passionately Seeking Christ-Like Character

Follow me. I have set you an example..



It's stating the obvious to point out that Christians are meant to be like Christ.

What's not always as obvious is to say that our ministry can intentionally set out to grow Christ like character in the young adults and teens that we share with.

It's not something that's often listed on the Youth Group Program or the Young Adults Social Calendar. And yet, is there any tougher challenge than to be passionately seeking to become like Jesus? That's some thing we all need a lot of help with surely!

In our ministry then, we need to help people know Jesus, read and understand the gospels, decipher what they tells us about his character, learn from the rest of the Bible what Jesus was on about before and after life on earth, and then translate all this in to our current world and our individual circumstances and personalities. That's some serious work! Exciting work!

"What would Jesus do in this situation?" is still a great question for disciples and apostles to be constantly asking themselves. How would we know unless we know Jesus really well? And then, how are we going to be able to do what Jesus would do, unless his life in infused with ours, his personality and character reflected in us and his compassion and courage are flowing through us?

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Apart from having a great connection with Jesus so that Jesus spirit is at work in and through us, we are not going to develop a Christ like character.

So our ministry in this area then, requires times when we research together about Jesus — who he was, how he treated people, what he valued and what he found repulsive and so on. We have to do character studies on Jesus.

That's the head knowledge. The heart part comes in at the level of helping people have a great relationship with Jesus. This is about helping them to relate to Jesus, to talk to him, to think of him often through out the day, to have him as their constant companion, to tap in to his love and wisdom constantly and to develop spiritual relationship skills with Jesus.

Head, heart and now hands! Out of our love and respect for Jesus; as a result of the fact that we hang out with him so much that his attitudes have rubbed off on us; because in our relationship with Jesus he has corrected, encouraged, inspired and shaped our character; now we find that we can be like Jesus. We can do what Jesus did, and be like Jesus is.

For a person new to the faith, how do they understand what following Christ and being like him would be like? They'll know if, in our ministry, we set experiences where we try to do some of the things Jesus did and if we set challenges to practise thinking and behaving like Jesus did.

People will get a taste for what Christ like character is when we take them to feed the poor, put them in a position to pray for others well being; set them tasks in fighting against racism, sexism or any other ism; challenge them to make friends with people who in the past they have kept on the outer of their friendship circles, give them values clarification exercises, ask them "What would you do if.." and then "What would Jesus do if.." and then "How might things work out if you did what Jesus did?.." and then "Are you prepared to pay the price of being like Jesus in that kind of situation?"

How will we know if our people are becoming like Jesus? Oh you'll know! They will love each other. They will have compassion for people outside their group.

They might also become more annoying than ever, because they'll always be asking questions to learn more about God, they might correct your church when it is out of line, they'll probably challenge you if you tell sexist jokes or make ageist remarks, they'll challenge your group to real involvement with scary people, they'll start bringing rough people along who wont tow the church line, then they'll start questioning materialistic values and suggesting we should be giving away more, and .. You get the picture. And wont we be proud of them! And maybe even a little bit scared by them! And hopefully even challenged to become more like them, because they are becoming more like Jesus.



What steps will you take to see young people nourished in this area?

What activities could you do with young people?

What resources will you require?

What resources will your young people need?

5. What Does **Growing Apostles** Mean For Me As a Leader?

Talk the talk and walk the walk. As a leader in the life of a church it is of the utmost importance to have an active faith life yourself. As stated in the beginning of this booklet: Faith is caught not taught.

You can't give what you haven't got. You can't model what you don't exemplify. Don't bother preaching it unless you are practising it.

- Never underestimate how little you will influence and feed others in the things of God, if you are not being influenced and fed by God yourself.
- As young people model their faith on what people who are "significant others" in their life do, (and what they perceive is done), your example is vital.

Growing Apostles can be an excellent tool for you to use to evaluate and take stock of your own life.

The 7 characteristics or Soul Food Groups of the **Growing Apostles** approach can be used to help us determine what aspects of our Christian life need attention. Just as we need to consider our diet, adequate rest and exercise to keep our bodies well, we need to also consider having a spiritual check up to see what we may need to modify in our faith life.

Youth leaders, mentors and those discipling others need to be especially careful that they are living a balanced and healthy spiritual life AND talking about it. They need to speak about their faith experiences and practises and joys and struggles so that young people know they are engaging in these ways with God. Young People will learn a lot from the way their leaders live and the things they model, perhaps more even than from the words they hear in bible studies, devotions or discussion groups. Leaders who are experimenting with each of the 'food groups', are more likely to be living a balanced spiritual life. This healthy faith life will be evident not only in their own lives but it will also start to show up in the youth leadership team, and in the way the leaders feed the young people. It's contagious! The 7 Soul Food Groups can be used as part of your regular youth leaders' team meeting to assess how you are functioning as a ministry. If the level of support and accountability in your team is high, you may like to encourage each leader to find a support person or 'spiritual dietitian' to help them reflect on their own spiritual life using the 7 Soul Food Groups. Then do the same with the young people they are discipling.

Is your spiritual diet balanced and will it sustain and support you for the long run?

What does your diet consist of? Are all 7 areas being worked on?

Leaders can use the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups to keep a check on healthy programming in their youth ministry

The 7 Soul Food Groups can be used as a tool to assess the programs and activities which are a part of a congregations youth ministry. The team responsible for ministry with young people in your church could consider each program in your church and identify which of the 7 Soul Food Groups are being strengthened. Some consideration could also be given to thinking about individual young people associated with your church who are not involved in your youth group. How are they being assisted to develop a balanced faith life? There are many valid reasons why a young person may not become involved in your youth activities and programs. These 7 Soul Food Groups mean that someone who is not participating regularly in a program can still be nourished with individual mentoring or accountability triads etc.

How is your current Youth program covering the 7 soul food groups?

Leaders can use the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups to challenge young people to grow in their faith.

The 7 Soul Food Groups can be used to help young people consider their personal faith life. After making their choice to follow the way of Jesus, young people need help to reflect on their relationship with Jesus and how to live out this faith in their everyday lives. The idea of diets, snacking and junk food is something that every young person is well aware of, even if they don't eat a balanced



healthy diet daily. The analogy of eating from various food groups is something that can help a young person understand the 7 Soul Food Groups and their importance in nurturing a healthy faith life.

Leaders can use the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups to encourage faith formation in the home

An important influence on the faith development of young people is the faith practises of their families. Perhaps it is even the MOST important! Often we struggle to know how to support families as they nurture their children, particularly when it comes to sharing faith at home. These 7 characteristics provide some 'tools' which parents can use to help young people develop in their faith. Putting the 7 soul food groups up on the fridge could be a simple way to encourage one another to live a balanced spiritual life. One of the 7 soul food groups could be used as the focus of the household's faith diet for a week. They set themselves some things to do in that soul food area, do them, share and pray together about them. Then they explore a different soul food the next week together.

How else could you encourage families faith formation with the 7 soul foods?

Leaders could use the **Growing Apostles** Soul Food Groups to encourage a congregation to become more intentional about its health

On a broader basis these 7 soul food groups provide a means by which individuals, groups and an entire congregation could assess the health of their lives together. There are many indicators as to what makes a healthy congregation, this healthy diet approach of **Growing Apostles** is a way in which a church can support young people in their spiritual lives and take stock of its own diet at the same time. It may be used as an evaluative tool but this framework also provides ideas for churches to use to help grow its ministry with young people or people of all ages for that matter. What if your church council/congregation had 7 task groups each developing experiences for the congregation on one of the soul foods?



What are some other ways that you could encourage the whole congregation to use the 7 soul food groups?

As a leader I think that this would be a great direction to our church's ministry

A later section of this booklet will look further at what you as a leader might do to Implement **Growing Apostles** and the 7 Soul Food Groups in your church's ministry. The first step, which you can take right now though is to begin with yourself. If you can use the 7 Soul Food Groups to balance your spiritual diet, and apply these in your own life, then you will have a better understanding of how this approach works from a first hand perspective.

However you decide to begin, make a definite choice to be intentional about using the approach for a few years. This is not a new program idea to try for a term and then move on to something new.

The **Growing Apostles** approach could be used as a framework for one-on-one mentoring of young people, in small Bible study groups, youth Sunday school sessions, in regular youth groups, referred to in worship, taken up by the whole congregation to make sure they are going beyond their favourite traditions and exploring all areas of faith life.

One thing is for sure, this could change lives.

John 10:10I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.



6. What Does **Growing Apostles** Mean For A Young Person?

Growing Apostles, or any effective youth ministry, invites young people to a loving, healthy relationship with God, in which they will enjoy God, be shaped in to Jesus likeness and experience the comfort and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to live godly lives which are a blessing to others. It's an invitation to an ever widening and deepening experience of God. It provides the impetus for a continually progressing discipleship. Faith is a blessing. It's life changing.

²"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

In Jesus we have a Master, a mate, meaning and a mission.

A young "**Growing Apostle**" is –

- Using gifts, abilities, and talents in a life of sacrificial service
- Enjoying intimate relationship with God
- Passionately seeking Christ-like character
- Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Cultivating authentic and Healthy relationships
- Belonging and participating in a community of faith
- Actively engaged in mission
- And inviting others to the party as well!!!

Those young people who have been fed, feed others, and become teachers of the faith – an Apostle is born.

² Galatians 5: 22-23 NIV



Support Strategies for your faith formation

Team Up

An individual can work on the 7 soul food groups, but it will be easier as a team.

Will your family join with you in experimenting with the 7 soul food groups?

What about setting up an accountability group who texts/facebooks/emails/chats with each other about what spiritual practices you tried each week and how they worked out? (And who will prompt each other when you get slack – which is bound to happen. It takes discipline to keep up any exercise routine!)

What if your Bible Study group set themselves homework in the 7 areas and report back in the sharing time? Or your youth group? Or your evening service?

What about asking a mentor to come on this journey with you, to work together on ways you can learn about and practice the 7 dimensions of faith development?

A Mentor

Look for at least one person to keep you accountable in your faith journey. Maybe an Elder you get on well with, a youth leader or Youth Worker, a Minister or a friend? Some one who has an active faith life would be a great choice as someone to keep you accountable to yourself and to God. Someone you trust. It can be a good idea to let your Minister or Youth Pastor or Elder or Church Council know that this is happening and who is fulfilling this role for you. If you aren't sure who to ask to be your mentor for this, ask the church for assistance.

You know from the start whether you need someone to “kick your butt” in matters of faith, or whether you can do this for yourself.

There are some questions offered at the end of this section, that you and your team/mentor/family/accountability team can use to discuss how your efforts are going.

Setting Goals

Set some goals. Eg, I am going to work out 5 exercises for each soul food group and try to do one a week, journal on it and read my Bible daily. Great!

Eg. You may want to focus on one **Soul Food Group** for 3 months. In this period, you can work on developing or improving in that particular characteristic. This would be done through intentionally engaging in activities and events, which will build that characteristic.

Set achievable goals, celebrate the successes and learn from the things that weren't possible to achieve. An important encouragement is to work on bite-size areas, rather than trying to do everything.



Sometimes we get over enthused about something new, and then a couple of months later, when the novelty has worn off, you realise that you had set your expectations too high - and they haven't been fulfilled. The risk then is that you give up on taking up spiritual disciplines ever again!

Changing your spiritual diet, or establishing new habits isn't easy.

Talking with a mentor, or others embarking on a similar path of developing their discipleship will help to keep you realistic, to deal with the disappointments and to share with you in the joys when things go well.

Another tip. Don't worry - **Growing Apostles** is not a replacement for other ideas and passions you already enjoy. If anything, the great strength of Growing Apostles is that it actually enables you to continue to work on what you are involved in for faith development. It probably already fits under one of the soul food groups! You might already be ticking a lot of the boxes in several areas of the soul food groups! Good on you! By using the **Soul Food Groups** you are able to be intentionally developing your faith, checking that it is in all areas and ensuring a balance.

Review and Rework

Although you would meet with your mentor frequently (determined by you and your mentor), we encourage you and your mentor to make time to sit down and intentionally discuss how things are going for you and if you want to keep working together, roughly every 3 months.

Tracking Your Journey

Keeping track of the progress of your own faith/spiritual journey can be really interesting. As you track your progress, this keeps you accountable and moving forward. You will also be able to see when you are not living a balance diet if you are tracking your journey. This will give you the opportunity and prompting to be able to refocus and balance things up again. It shows you what areas you are neglecting and which you are favouring.

Eg. Write the titles of each of the 7 soul food groups, in different sections of a journal. Each time you engage with an area, write about it prayerfully in your journal. Check every so often how the balance is going between each of the areas.

Celebrate!

As you develop and grow it is important to have times of celebration to acknowledge your efforts with the various **Soul Food Groups**. You might like to think of how and plan with your mentor or team, ways to celebrate your faith growth.

Matthew 5:16 (The Message)

14-16 "Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

The Fridge and the Skeys (mini Fridges)

The Fridge book, or the smaller versions of it, the Skeys, are fantastic places to start dipping in to spiritual disciplines from the 7 soul food groups. **The Fridge** is a 'spiritual journal' guide to help you have a balanced diet. It has hundreds of pages of activities, questions, interactive experiences and places for you to log your journey, as you are stretched and grown. **The Fridge** is a place for you to hangout with God.

Email tomk@nat.uca.org.au for enquiries about The Fridge or Skeys.

Assembly Support

Need to know more, to share your experiences, joys, progress or frustrations, or to hunt down resources?

Please make contact with Tom Kerr, tomk@nat.uca.org.au



Guided Conversation for Mentors / Team Work on faith formation

(This is not exhaustive, but just a basis for starting the conversation)

How have you been going with developing your discipleship / connecting with God lately?

Of the seven **Soul Food Groups** which one/s have you focused on over the last week/ months?

How have you developed personally in these **Soul Food Group** areas? What did you specifically do to develop these characteristics?

What have been some highlights of being intentional and strategic about your spiritual growth journey?

Which **Soul Food Groups** or other areas of your faith journey have you found challenging?

Which **Soul Food Groups** are you going to focus on developing over the next week/ months?

How might you develop these characteristics?

Pg 54 has a diagram you might find helpful in mapping things out.



7. How might **Growing Apostles** look in my congregation?

The possibilities of how **Growing Apostles** may look in your congregation are endless. See pages 86 to 88

Here are some frameworks given for you to start to analyse what you are currently doing in the seven **Soul Food Groups** and where there might be some deficiencies. Once identified you may like to find ways to start filling the gaps in your youth ministry.

Growing Apostles will probably affirm many of the ministries already in place in the life of your congregation and it may also inspire you to entirely new directions.

Individually

A young person or adult who wants to grow in their relationship with Christ, and is looking for some ideas and a structure to help, might find this approach and **The Fridge** a fantastic starting place. This may work really well for someone who isn't able to be involved in a youth group or small group (eg shift worker) but still wants to be a 'Growing Apostle'.

One to one mentoring

If your church wanted to develop a mentoring program for young people, the **Soul Food Groups** and the questions that go with them (refer to **The Fridge**), could be a ready made set of topics to explore together on a regular basis. Mentoring meetings could happen face to face, via email conversations, Facebook, Skype or phone.

In Small Groups

The seven **Soul Food Groups** are an excellent and easy to use way to stimulate discussion in small groups. After school discussion groups could meet at a young person's home using, as a starting point for conversations, the questions or spiritual disciplines from the **The Fridge**. There are a large number of small group resources available to promote healthy spiritual discussions for adolescents through to young adults.

Youth Groups

The **Growing Apostles** framework offers an approach to youth ministry that enables leaders to pick and choose a variety of resources that help disciple young people and their leaders. One of the 7 **Soul Food Groups** could be focused on each month in devotions or as part of a group covenant to be lived out at school, home and in the community.



Young Adults

In planning a young adult ministry, congregations should make sure they are providing experiences in all seven of the **Soul Food Groups**. Young Adults will help you be creative and 'out there' as a church, as they yearn to take ministry beyond the status quo. You can help young adults to take up the challenge to grow towards Apostleship as you encounter God together.

Households

Young people, their parent/s and other members of a household have the opportunity to be growing individually and as a unit. The spiritual interactions will strengthen the quality of home life. The seven **Soul Food Groups** spiritual exercises could be used and then discussed at meal time once a week. Households could plan mission projects, service activities, church engagements, healthy relationship exercises etc together. They could do the projects, reflect on how it went, pray together and then plan the next adventure together.

Inter-Generational Groups

Congregations or Faith Communities could choose together to be involved in **Growing Apostles** by adopting the seven **Soul Food Groups** as a way to reflect on their life. Offering regular opportunities for people to consider and discuss the aspects of faith and life identified in this approach would provide meaningful discussion to build each other up in faith, and create significant dialogue across generations.

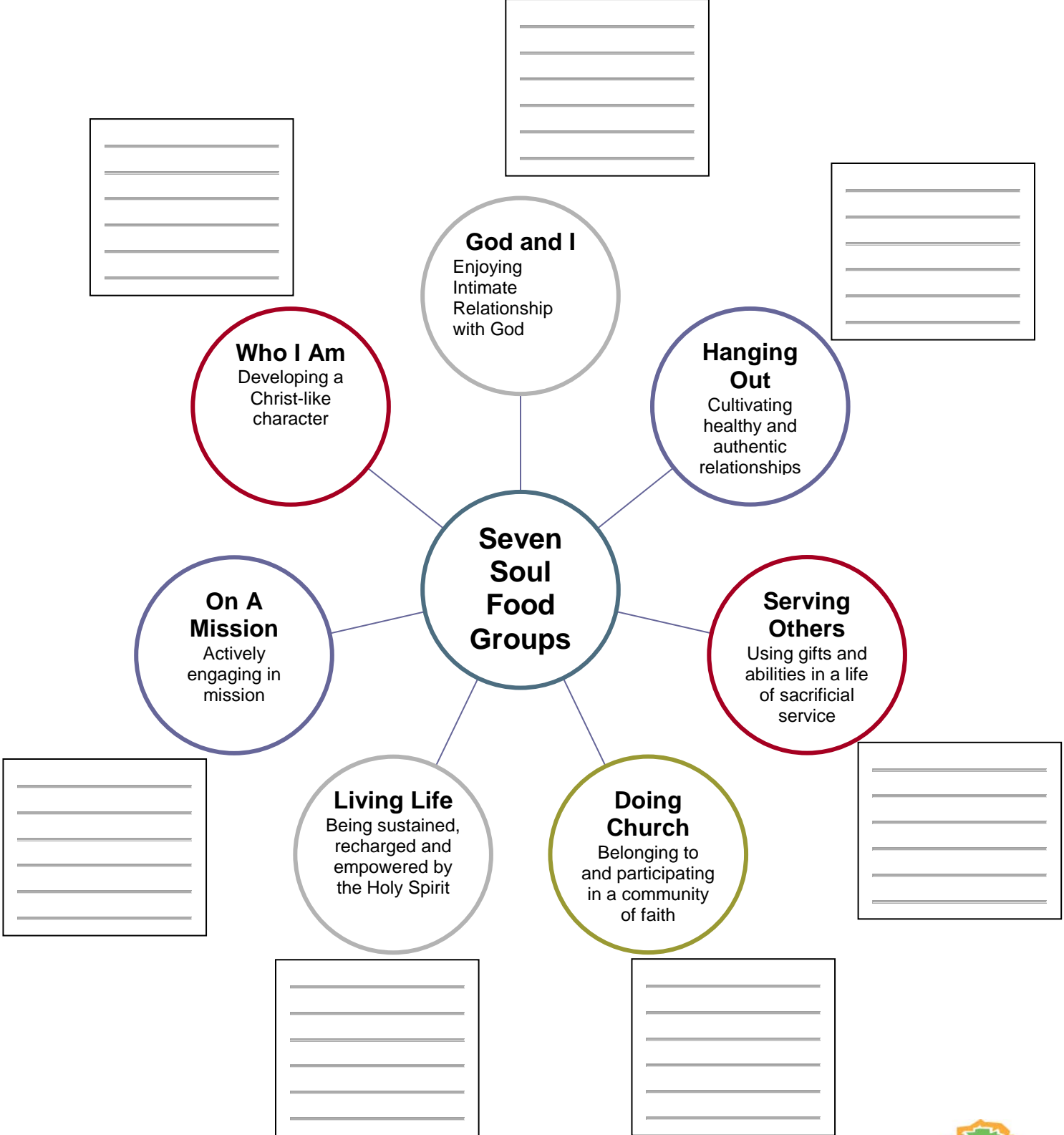
The contexts and situations where **Growing Apostles** can be applied is limitless.

Below are a diagram, a table, and some questions for you to fill in (you may want to use a separate sheet of paper so you can photocopy this sheet again and again) to map where ministry in your church is currently. This will help you plan for **Growing Apostles** in all the necessary **Soul Food Groups**.

What You Are Currently Doing

List in the boxes beside each of the **Soul Food Groups**, the ministry opportunities that young people in your church participate in, which relate to that food group. Don't panic if you are unable to put something in any or all of the boxes.





Where Are We Now, Where Do We Need To Focus?

What size is your Group / What format is your Group	Traditional <u>Youth Group</u> , games and activities with a short devotional time	<u>Small Group</u> , more faith and sharing based	Focus on the Soul Food Groups for the <u>whole group</u> .	Focus on the Soul Food Groups for <u>individual members</u> of the group or individually.
0 to 10 Members				
10 to 17 Members				
20 to 45 Members				
Over 45 Members				
Other				

1. Where would you place the ministries of your church on the above grid? There may be more than one place that is appropriate.
2. Looking back to the previous diagram's **Soul Food Groups**, are there **Soul Food Groups** that are sadly absent from the diet? Jot them down.



3. Reflecting on the previous diagram's **Soul Food Groups**, are there ways that the current ministry format you use could be adapted to better cater for the "Spiritual Dietary needs" of the young people involved? Jot some down.

4. What links can you draw between the absent **Soul Food Groups** and blank spaces on the above grid? Jot down some possible ways of filling the voids.

5. There is no expectation that any group's or individual's diet will become holistic overnight. But there is a need to plan not only your personal life, but also that of the young people in your church. Jot down the names of some people who it would be good to sit down with and go through these exercises.



6. You will notice that to **Grow Apostles**, some necessary parts of the diet will work fine in the larger group, but many of them will need a smaller, more intimate setting for the **Soul Food** ‘preparation’. Look back over this section of the booklet and jot down some of your initial ‘gut’ reactions to what might need to happen:

- In your personal faith journey
- In your approach to ministry with others to sharpen it’s focus.
- In your local congregation or ministry context
- If there are any areas of ministry that are currently happening in your church, that may need to cease as you plan for feeding young people a wholesome and balanced diet?
- For you to be able to better explain the **Soul Food Groups** and **Growing Apostles** approach to other people.

7. **Growing Apostles** is an “approach” to ministry. If ones approach to ministry is structured and ordered, the end result will be far better than if we ‘just do it’ because that is the ‘in thing’ or just ‘what we do’.

All the best with your assessing, planning and implementing of **Growing Apostles**. Don’t forget that if you need someone to assist with any of the stages of that you may need to journey through, that YACMU staff are available for this and see it as a high priority.



8. How Do I Implement **Growing Apostles** – In My Own Life?

“I like the idea of being intentional about developing my faith. I think the Growing Apostles’ Seven Soul Food Groups presents a really well balanced spiritual diet for me. I’ve got some questions though.”

Where do I start? With any of the 7 Soul Food Groups you like!

But which one comes first? There’s no set order

Well, which is the most important one? They are all important

What if I decide I am not into one or two of the Soul Food Groups and drop them out?

Then your faith will not be balanced. You will be neglecting an area of your spirituality that you need to develop. You will miss out on some fantastic experiences with God.

But what do I do to grow in a particular area?

You can set your own agenda - develop your own personal journey. You can use the Growing Apostles Journal [The Fridge](#) as a basis for the spiritual experiences you undertake. Or you might use any other resource that will help you grow in a particular characteristic.

Am I finished when I have done something in all 7 areas?

We are never finished growing. Start again. Cover the areas in new ways. Have new experiences with God in each of the characteristics. Go deeper each time you revisit one of Soul Food Groups. Each time you decide to grow spiritually, approach them with an ever-growing maturity. It’s a spiraling curriculum where we keep coming back to the same 7 characteristics over and over again, but with each visit we have moved outward and upward. We have grown in our breadth of experience and with our closeness to God. Remember to invite others on e faith journey too. Share your faith experiences. Grow other disciples and encourage them to grow other disciples.

So am I stuck doing this for a lifetime?

Yes. No. Maybe. You are on a journey with God. As Christ’s disciples we are meant to be becoming more like Jesus in our daily lives. Be intentional about developing our spirituality any way that works for you.



So, YES we are challenged to keep on growing in our faith for the rest of our lives! And No, you don't have to keep to this framework, but we do recommend that you stay mindful to keep a balance in your spiritual diet and that you don't neglect any of the 7 Soul Food Groups. And....Maybe this Growing Apostles Framework will serve you well for the rest of your life. The principles certainly make sense for a life long adventure in faith development.

Take Responsibility for Your Own Faith Development Journey

There's no point saying, "I haven't grown much as a Christian because ..

- My church doesn't have very good teaching
- The youth group leaders don't really relate to where I am coming from
- I keep hearing the same thing over and over again...

Your relationship with God is a "you and God" thing. You need to put in your effort to keep the relationship alive and healthy. God does too. Ministers, family, Christian friends, Youth Group leaders, Bible study leaders, these are all people who may be resources for you and might encourage, support and stimulate your faith. But they can't live your faith for you. Blaming others for your lack of growth just doesn't cut it!

In a similar way in Matthew 25, the foolish virgins wanted to borrow oil from the wise ones, they couldn't, because one can not borrow the good oil or "faith" from those around them, they must go and find their own faith. You also must take responsibility for your own faith.

Each of us needs to be committed to God... **Forever.**

The **Growing Apostles** Framework challenges you to be intentional about growing your faith in God, developing your relationship with God, becoming more like Christ and serving him in a life long discipleship.

Here's a way you can do this.

Understand what the seven Soul Food Groups are about.

Seek to intentionally have spiritual experiences in each of the areas.

Reflect on the experiences and ask God to teach you what he needs to.

Add more experiences.

Reflect more. Grow more.

Keep on intentionally serving, praying, developing, absorbing, caring, receiving, giving... all your life.

The **Growing Apostles** journal **The Fridge** is one way you might get some structure as it helps you to develop. Of course there are other ways too. **The Fridge** can be used for a year, for 5 years — or for the rest of your life. It's a great place to start if you are stuck for ideas. When you are ready, feel free to move on from it, return to it again and again, but always remember balance in your spiritual diet.



Each time you come to a challenge, you'll be approaching it from a new vantage point and will see new things from the challenge, The Fridge might become a good old friend to guide you through these times. Tracking your use of **The Fridge** and your spiritual journey will help you make sure you are not avoiding or neglecting particular areas. Using the tracking pages in **The Fridge** can help prompt you to take on new challenges in each and every one of the Soul Food Groups.

See pages 83 – 85 of this manual for spiritual exercises in each of the areas



9. How Do We Implement **Growing Apostles** – In Our Context?

Forming an Action Plan for Implementation

Most change encounters some resistance, some acceptance, and some requests for further convincing. The more impact the change is going to have, the more intense each of the reactions will be to it from each end of the spectrum. Positive planning for productive change can reduce the stress significantly.

If we know why we want to initiate new ministries and clearly articulate our; goals, expected outcomes, and the steps to take to arrive there, people are more likely to have confidence in the new directions we recommend.

Let us help you formulate an action plan for implementing The **Growing Apostles** approach to youth ministry in your church. Below are some suggestions for the steps you might undertake to make it happen. Following on from the list of suggestions there are some resources for thinking through each stage in the Resource Appendix at the end of this booklet.

As you plan, be realistic about your context, the skills with in your congregation, the young people you have and so on.

Planning to **Grow Apostles** as a Church Community

People

Who will we ask to develop and initiate this project? Who will be in your leadership team? Can it be initiated and run by only one person if necessary?

Think about the sorts of characteristics you need for the kind of job you are asking of people.

People who are passionate about their faith, who care about young people, can relate well to them and will be committed to helping them grow in their faith are the sorts of people you need for the Growing Apostles framework. What other characteristics do you think would be important? Recruit with these characteristic in mind.



Purpose

What does your church want to achieve in their ministries to young people?

Be clear on your objectives.

Make sure these are articulated and that everyone is aware of what you want to achieve.

The **Growing Apostles** framework for youth ministry is clearly on about developing people's faith to the point where they are following Christ and encouraging others to do so too. There can be other goals that link in with this, support it, or lead up to it.

Past Performance

Evaluate what you have already been doing in youth ministry and the outcomes against your expressed purpose.

If your goals are being met, think very carefully before making significant changes.

If on the other hand your goals are not being met, you have every reason to plan new approaches.



Programs with Potential to Produce (including ministries, strategies, approaches etc)

What ministries will help you achieve your goals?

A “Growing Apostles” goal is to develop disciples who will call others to commitment too. To achieve this, you will need styles of ministries which dedicate a lot of time to faith sharing, to Biblical input, run by people who can model discipleship and so on. Bible study groups, discipleship groups, accountability triads, mentoring – these are some examples of ministries that have the potential to achieve this goal.

If another of the goals is to connect with young people in your community who are not in the church, you will need a ministry that puts leaders in the places where young people are or which is attractive enough to draw young people to be involved in it. Plan programs that will help you achieve your purposes, not just get numbers of people gathered together.

Parallels

What other ministries will need to be developed to fulfill other youth ministry goals? Who can we delegate these ministries to?



People

Position Descriptions for Key Players

When you know what you want to do and why, your project initiators will be ready to recruit leaders, if they themselves are not going to be the leaders running the ministries.

Before recruiting, work out what the character expectations are for your leaders. Work out what tasks the job will require of them. Spell these out clearly and give them to people in writing before they make a decision as to whether or not to commit to the project.

A position description for participants can also lay a foundation for the behaviors and attitudes that will be acceptable in your group. You will want to make it a safe place, where everyone feels at ease, accepted in sharing their views and free to honestly explore their faith. You will want participants to cooperate with the leaders and the program so that the groups can live out it's intentions.

Pace

What is your time line?

When do we want to start by?

How often will this ministry take place – weekly, fortnightly, a 6 week seminar???

When do we hope to see significant development towards our goals by?



Place

Where is the best place to run such a ministry?

Environments each have their own ambience that can affect the kind of things you are achieving.

- A big church hall with 4 people meeting in it can seem lonely and cold.
- A coffee shop with 20 people trying to share together can be very distracting.

Evaluate the atmosphere of where you will meet on the basis of

- Comfort levels
- Distractions
- Learning tools which may be required
- Ease of getting to
- Child safe church issues
- Confidentiality... etc

What kind of learning atmosphere does this environment allow for?



Promotions

How would we effectively connect with our target group to invite them to participate?

Personal invitations from genuine relationships are usual the best form of advertising. Ask your people to think of whom they might personally invite.

Powering Up

What resources are necessary to empower this new ministry?

Pathways

In what ways will this ministry intentionally create pathways into the Kingdom of God and / or into the life of the church?

Performance Indicators

How will we evaluate the effectiveness of this new ministry as it goes along?

What are the performance indicators that will help us decide if we are on track or not?



Pals Who Will Support This Ministry

Firstly those who are passionate about **Growing Apostles**. Don't spend hours, weeks or even years trying to convince those who aren't interested. Find those who have a passion and work with them and encourage them to work with you.

Talk with your Minister, Youth Pastor, Elder, Church Councilor, Youth Leader - others who have an interest and passion for young people. Let them know the whys and wherefores of what **Growing Apostles** is about. If you have done the groundwork, any or all of these people will be pleased to support you.

Prayer

Last but not least. Pray about where God is calling your ministry. Work on and sort out your own spiritual diet using the approach offered through the Soul Food Groups. Work with people not against them. Work smartly, not arrogantly. Listen and learn from other people. Work through the necessary steps. Always ask the question "Is this right, or am I missing something that God is saying to us?". And in the words of 1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV) "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

10. How do we celebrate and recognize our **Growing Apostles**?

As has been mentioned in other sections of this booklet, it is important to reflect, review and celebrate our relationship with God. So when might be a good time to throw yourself or others a Banquet?

- As you begin **Growing Apostles**
- As you review and see that you have grown significantly in one or more Soul Food Groups
- As you see others have grown, name that, encourage and help them to celebrate also.
- As other people embark on the **Growing Apostles** journey.



How to celebrate

As You Begin **Growing Apostles**

It may be appropriate for your congregation to recognize this new step in your faith journey during a service of worship. This could be through one or more of the following:

- A prayer of support and encouragement
- Presentation of “**The Fridge**” during the worship service
- A laying on of hands
- An adaptation of “A Celebration of New Beginnings in Faith” from *Uniting in Worship 1* Page 433 (People’s Book page 100)
- An adaptation of “Commissioning of Leaders of Congregational Groups and Ministries” from *Uniting in Worship 2* (cd rom)

At times of recognised significant growth

It may be appropriate to celebrate these miles stones by

- Sharing a testimony in a service of worship, small group, youth group, or bible study group.
- Going out for a meal with some friends. Naming upfront why you want to go out and celebrate, and share with your friends during the meal some of that journey.
- Buying yourself something that helps represent what that milestone means to you. Maybe a book from your Christian Bookstore, a necklace with a cross, a Christian bookmark or even a Bible (maybe to give to someone else if you are really radical).

When others have grown

All of us need encouragement and support. Most of us wouldn’t be where we are in our own faith, if it hadn’t been for someone ‘sponsoring’ or ‘mentoring’ or ‘just noticing’ us.

Maybe if you know someone is struggling you could support them. Supporting them might involve doing some of the things mentioned in the above paragraphs as an encouragement for their faith journey. Maybe it might be walking with them and then finding opportunities with them to celebrate. You may suggest that together you find a way for them to celebrate when a certain milestone is achieved. Give them permission to enjoy what God is doing in their life.

Celebrate in prayer

Whatever the situation, whether celebration, frustration, joys, anger, or exasperation, never forget to take it to God in prayer. A mature Apostle will never be far from God’s presence through prayer.



11. Resources Appendix

The following resources are offered as tools that may prompt areas of thought that may have not occurred to you. Feel free to use or adapt as you see fit.....



This table below is useful in understanding some of the changes in ministry over time.

Where Have We Come From?	Where Can We Go?
Entertainment Based Youth Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominant focus on games and outings to attract young people to youth group. • Goal is often to provide a social outlet for youth group members. • Small amount of time planned for devotions. 	Discipleship Based Youth Ministry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on intentional discipleship. • Goal is for young people to grow in their relationship with Christ. • Group may do something socially together once per month. • Leaders spend time planning how they will help young people grow spiritually.
Numerical Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on how many young people attend youth group. • Goal it to attract more young people. 	Spiritual Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on helping young people grow spiritually. • Spiritual growth, not numerical growth is important.
Large Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people meet together as a large group at a church hall or another venue. • Leaders are often program directors and their time can be consumed with behaviour management. 	Small Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four to ten young people meet with two adults. • Emphasis is on building relationships with young people and sharing life together.
Creating Consumers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning time is spent on designing a big and better program than last term. • Young people often choose what night they attend depending what is on offer. 	Creating Disciples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose is to create disciples as Jesus instructs us too. • Planning time is spent on looking at the big picture and asking how can we help young people grow as disciples. • Young people commit to the group and are generally consistent.



People Worksheet

Developing a **Character Check List** for your Growing Apostles Leadership Team

We need leaders who..

- Are passionate about their faith
- Care about young people
- Can relate well to young people and understand the issues that confront them
- Are committed to helping young people grow in their faith
- Are good role models as Christ's followers - people we would want others to imitate
- Are comfortable sharing their faith and at the same time open to young people questioning, expressing doubts, exploring alternative views and grappling with beliefs before they decide to own them.

What other characteristics are important?

Which of the above list you would omit or modify?

Draw up a list that your church would agree with.

Recruit leaders with these characteristics in mind.

Developing a List of Expectations for Leaders

Our leaders will be expected to..

- Commit to attending regularly
- Prepare well
- Pray for the participants and fellow leadership team members
- Pastorally care for the participants
- Keep parents informed about the group and it's activities
- Form positive relationships with the young people's parents
- Set a safe environment where no spiritual, emotional, sexual or physical abuse will be allowed and will report any offending behaviors to higher authorities
- Follow up members who have missed two sessions in a row
- Use an approved study guide as a basis for faith formation
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early to any meeting in case young people have been dropped off early
- Wait until all young people have been collected before leaving
- Call parents who are late to check on picking up arrangements for their youth
- Are cautious and aware of Gender and Power issues, implications and procedures. (eg when giving lifts home, being alone with etc)

Which dot points of the above list you would omit or modify?

What other expectations do you have?

Draw up a list that your church would agree with.

Before recruiting leaders, draw up a Position Description that includes both your expectations list and the character traits. Show people you are approaching for leadership your position description and give them time to think about them carefully.

Purpose Worksheet

What does your church want to achieve in their ministries to young people?

Be clear on your objectives.

Make sure these are articulated and that everyone is aware of what you want to achieve.

The list below can be used as a spring board for designing your goals.

Our Growing Apostles framework for youth ministry is on about..

- Developing young people's faith
- To the point where they are following Christ
- And encouraging others to do so too.

Our goals for our Youth Ministry then are

- to be in contact with young people in our community so that we can build positive relationships with them
- From these genuine relationships, to earn the right to encourage people to have a vital, personal relationship with God — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- To help people explore and own the Christian faith
- To give resources and experiences which will help them to keep on developing their faith
- To inspire them to follow Christ in their daily living — with their heads, their hearts and their hands — in their thoughts, attitudes, emotions, relationships and actions
- To help young people experience life in all its fullness with Christ
- To have people living with Jesus in such a way that the gospel truly is good news to them
- To have young people wanting to and equipped to, share the good news with others
- To develop skills in faith sharing so that they can invite others in to a personal relationship with Christ and to peer disciple each other
- To help our church young people see the value of being intentional about developing their faith, and to take some responsibility for doing so
- To provide a variety of ways by which they can take responsibility for developing their faith
- Build pathways in to the worshipping life of our congregation
- Provide opportunities for young people to discover and exercise their gifts in meaningful contributions to the mission and ministry of the church

Which of the above would you keep for your goals list?

Which would you take out?

Which would you modify?

What would you add?

Past Performance Worksheet 1

Evaluate what you have already been doing in youth ministry and the outcomes against your expressed purpose.

If your goals are being met, think very carefully before making significant changes.

If on the other hand your goals are not being met, you have every reason to plan new approaches.

Some pertinent questions for evaluation of your past performance in youth ministry

Over the last 5 years, who are the young people we have been in contact with through our youth ministries, (including those who attend worship, youth groups, mentoring programs, pastoral care, Youth Alpha courses etc) It may be helpful to find attendance rolls for this exercise.

Of those who you have been in contact with, how many..

- are still participants in your youth ministry
- have left your church and why? (eg. family moved away, got bored, stopped coming, went to another church, grew out of the style of program we offered and did not graduate in to the next program..)
- have made commitments to follow Christ
- are regularly attending worship
- actively seek to follow Christ's example in their daily lives
- share their faith with others
- have brought friends along to our ministries
- are developing Christ like character and values
- give leadership or service in the mission and ministry of the church
- practice spiritual disciplines each day which help them in their relationship with God

What are the other important questions you need to ask yourselves in order to evaluate whether or not your youth ministry in the past has been effective in reaching your goals?

In the light of the answers you come to from these questions what conclusions do you come to?

eg. Our programs do / do not help us reach our goals

We have / have not given adequate emphasis to faith development

We help / do not help our young people to relate to God in their personal daily lives apart from our Church based programs



S.W.O.T. Analysis
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

S. I believe our strengths in youth ministry include

I regard these are strengths because

W. I believe we have more work to do in

because

O. I can see opportunities in

because

T. I believe the following areas pose some threat to our ministry with this age group

because

I think the single most important thing for us to address is

because

The Growing Apostles Framework will be helpful for us in the following ways...



Programs with Potential to Produce... Worksheet

Outreach, evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, service, social justice, Christian education — there are many facets to consider in designing a well rounded Youth Ministry.

What ever your focus in youth ministry, remember to choose programs or approaches that will help you to achieve your youth ministry goals.

Remember..

that youth ministry can happen in many contexts —

the home

with the family

in the school

at the sports club

the church

the friendship network

in cyberspace

out camping etc.

Remember ..

that youth ministry can be about

an individual and their personal relationship with God

a couple of people sharing faith together

a triad who meet for prayer or accountability

a small group who do Bible study or give Christian support for real life issues

a larger group who meet regularly for fellowship, fun and faith

an entire congregation who worship and witness together

youth rallies for mega gatherings



Growing Apostles Programs with Potential to Produce - Worksheet

Intimacy with God

Goals

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**

Ministries / Programs / Strategies to achieve these goals

Work through each of the seven Soul Food Groups in a similar way

Healthy Relationships

Christ -like Character

Faith Community

Service

Mission

Empowered by the Holy Spirit



Position Descriptions for Key Players

Before recruiting leaders for your youth ministry, work out what the character expectations are for your leaders. Work out what tasks the job will require of them. Spell these out clearly and give them to people in writing before they make a decision as to whether or not to commit to the project.

See the **People** Section where you worked out your character and task expectations. Rewrite these lists as a Position Description to give to potential leaders.

A position description for participants can also lay a foundation for the behaviours and attitudes that will be acceptable in your group.

For example.....

Participants of our youth ministry will help us to ensure that our group / ministry is

- a safe place emotionally, physically, sexually and spiritually
- where everyone feels at ease, accepted, valued and respected
- a place where we can all share our views honestly, explore our faith freely and know it is okay to doubt, believe, question, explore possibilities because we are all learning together.
- a place where members and leaders cooperate together to keep the goals of the group in focus and to behave in ways which will ensure the group can live out it's intentions
- we help each other experience the love of God

Pace

What is your time line for starting up our Youth Ministry/ new initiatives / Growing Apostles Group this year?

Leaders recruited and trained by –

Program / resources developed by –

Promotional materials/ strategies devised by -

Participants invited by –

Starting date for first gathering –

Our first evaluation and review of the ministries effectiveness will be conducted on –

Subsequent check up s will be conducted every –

At what stage do we expect a call to commitment to Christ would be appropriate?

When do we intend to link people in with the worship services?

At what stage will we be encouraging them to develop their own personal spiritual life and offering them resources / strategies to help them with this?

How often will this ministry take place – weekly, fortnightly, a 6 week seminar???

How long will each session go for?

Will we design a template for meetings eg. Open with food. Have a sharing time. Pray for each other. Input. Spiritual homework/ assignment for the next week. End in prayer

When do we hope to see significant development towards our goals by?

Place

Where is the best place to run such a ministry and why?

A home because...

The church because...

A Coffee shop because...

Promotions

How would we effectively connect with our target group to invite them to participate?

Powering Up

What resources are necessary to empower this new ministry?

Pathways

In what ways will this ministry intentionally create pathways into the Kingdom of God and / or into the life of the church?

Performance Indicators

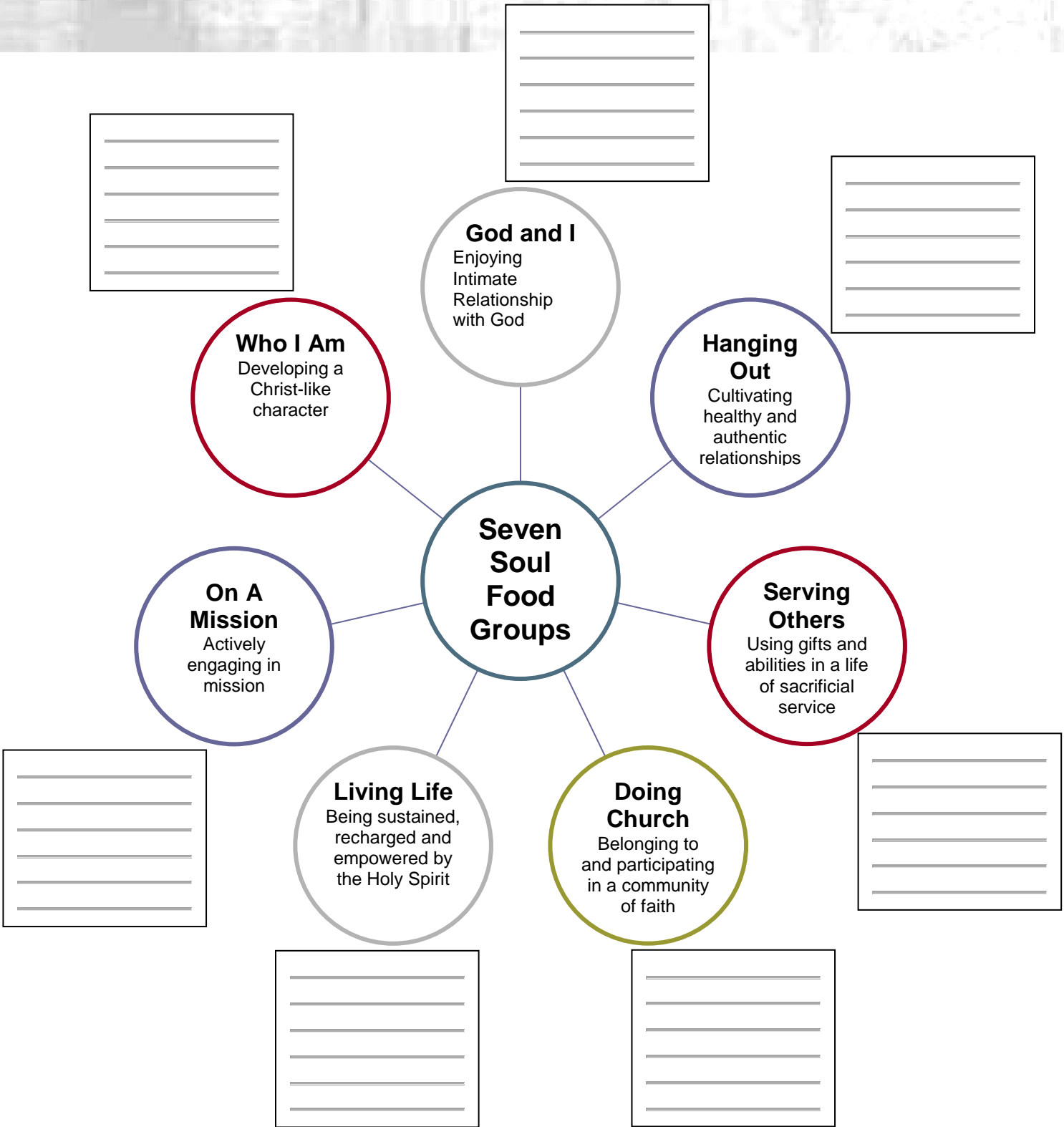
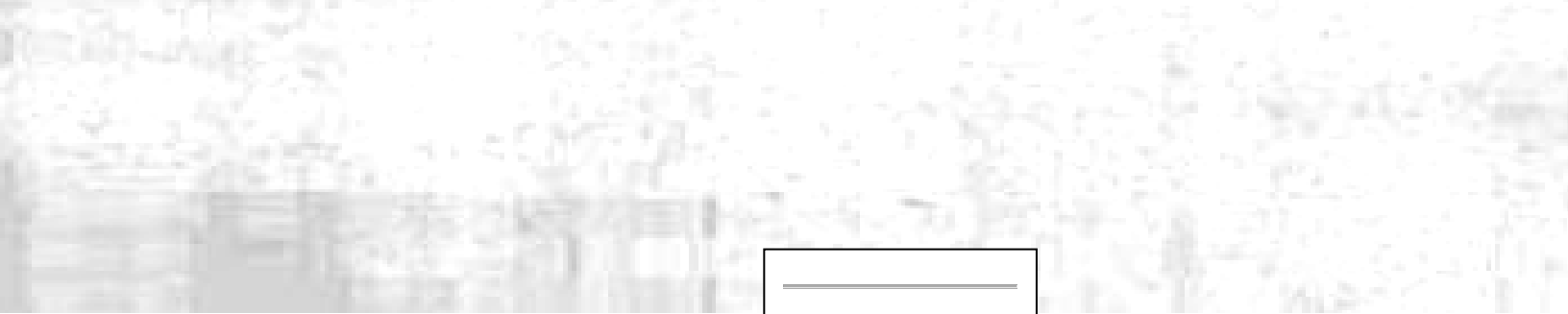
How will we evaluate the effectiveness of this new ministry as it goes along?

What are the performance indicators which will help us decide if we are on track or not?

What You Are Currently Doing (enlarge the diagram on the next page to A3 size for a group to work with)

List in the boxes beside each of the **Soul Food Groups**, the ministry opportunities that young people in your church participate in, which relate to that food group. Don't panic if you are unable to put something in any or all of the boxes.





Where Are We Now, Where Do We Need To Focus

What size is your Group / What format is your Group	Traditional <u>Youth Group</u> , games and activities with a short devotional time	<u>Small Group</u> , more faith and sharing based	Focus on the Soul Food Groups for the <u>whole group</u> .	Focus on the Soul Food Groups for <u>individual members</u> of the group or individually.
0 to 10 Members				
10 to 17 Members				
20 to 45 Members				
Over 45 Members				
Other				

1. Where would you place the ministries of your church on the above grid? There may be more than one place that is appropriate.
2. Looking back to the previous diagram's **Soul Food Groups**, are there **Soul Food Groups** that are sadly absent from the diet? Jot them down.
3. Reflecting on the previous diagram's **Soul Food Groups**, are there ways that the current ministry format you use could be adapted to better cater for the "Spiritual Dietary needs" of the young people involved? Jot some down.
4. What links can you draw between the absent **Soul Food Groups** and blank spaces on the above grid? Jot down some possible ways of filling the voids.
5. There is no expectation that any group's or individual's diet will become holistic overnight. But there is a need to plan not only your personal life, but also that of the young people in your church. Jot down the names of some people who it would be good to sit down with and go through these exercises.



6. You will notice that to **Grow Apostles**, some necessary parts of the diet will work fine in the larger group, but many of them will need a smaller, more intimate setting for the **Soul Food** 'preparation'. Look back over this section of the booklet and jot down some of your initial 'gut' reactions to what might need to happen:
- In your personal faith journey
 - In your approach to ministry with others to sharpen it's focus.
 - In your local congregation or ministry context
 - If there are any areas of ministry that are currently happening in your church, that may need to cease as you plan for feeding young people a wholesome and balanced diet?
 - For you to be able to better explain the **Soul Food Groups** and **Growing Apostles** approach to other people.

7. Growing Apostles is an "approach" to ministry. If ones approach to ministry is structured and ordered, the end result will be far better than if we 'just do it' because that is the 'in thing' or 'just what we do'.

All the best with your assessing, planning and implementing of **Growing Apostles**. Don't forget that if you need someone to assist with any of the stages of that you may need to journey through, that YACMU staff are available for this and see it as a high priority.





A handout explaining how individuals can engage in faith practises in the 7 soul food groups

The 7 Soul Food Groups



for a well balanced spiritual diet

Everybody knows that what we eat makes a big difference to our health. Too much junk food, not enough of the right foods, crash diets, binge eating, not getting enough exercise; they're all bad for us.

On the other hand, when we do eat and exercise properly, our bodies respond well. We feel great both physically and emotionally. It's excellent to be fit and healthy!

In a similar way, our souls need proper nourishment and exercise too. We need a well-balanced diet consisting of all the seven essential spiritual food groups.

God and I	Enjoying an intimate relationship with God
Hanging Out	Cultivating healthy and authentic relationships
Serving Others	Using gifts and abilities in a life of sacrificial service
Doing Church	Belonging and participating in a community of faith
Living Life	Sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit
On A Mission	Actively engaged in mission
Who I Am	Passionately developing a Christ-like character

Here are just some of the things you can do in each of the areas. Have fun!

God and I

short prayers, long prayers, meditation, enjoying creation Bible reading, worship, hanging out with Jesus, going for a walk with God, writing,



drawing or singing your prayers, listening to God, enjoying God, trusting God, quiet times, learning more about God, reflecting on nature finding God in others etc

Luke 10 v 25 – 28 Phil 4 v 4 – 7 Psalm 103 v 1 - 5 Romans 8 v 31 – 39

HANGING OUT: cultivating healthy and authentic relationships

being as Jesus to others, learning how to care, encouraging others, speaking the truth in a spirit of love setting appropriate boundaries being kind, dealing well with conflict, enjoying and appreciating others being real, accepting differences, complimenting / correcting others forgiving etc

John 13v 34, 35 1 Corinthians 13 Matthew 5 v 23, 24 Colossians 3 v 12–14

SERVING OTHERS: using gifts and abilities in a life of sacrificial service

Helping, being generous with time, energies, talents or things, making sacrifices for the good of others, being Christ like in service, random acts of kindness, turning off the tele to give more time to your friends or family, developing excellence in the way you do things for others etc

Matthew 5 v 14 – 16 James 2 v 14 – 17 John 13 v 13 – 16

DOING CHURCH: belonging to and participating in a community of faith

Welcoming new people, being there, doing your part, inviting friends to come, encouraging and thanking others who serve in the church, being loyal to your church, making the church a better place to belong to, really worshipping, joining a Bible study group, befriending all ages etc

1 Corinthians 12 v 27 Ephesians 2 v 19 and 22 Colossians 1 v 17 – 18
Hebrews 10 v 24 – 25

LIVING LIFE: being sustained, recharged and empowered by the



Holy Spirit

Soaking up God's love for you, counting your blessings, playing, retreats, getting your priorities right, resting, letting God comfort you in the tough times, being creative with God, feasting, stop worrying and trust God, running, surfing, dancing, moving in any way you enjoy as a spiritual exercise etc

John 10 v 10 Acts 1 v 8 Psalm 63 v 1 – 8 John 14 v 15 – 15 v 16

ON A MISSION: actively engaging in mission

being a good mate to your non church friends, sharing faith, praying for others, sponsoring a child through Compassion or World Vision, smiling, being kind, cleaning up the environment, sticking up for people who are being picked on, protesting against injustice, giving leadership in a kids or youth ministry etc

Matthew 28 v 19 – 20 Matthew 25 v 31 – 40 Romans 10 v 13 - 15

WHO I AM: developing a Christ-like character

living according to what you say you believe is right, following Jesus, knowing what Jesus is like and then trying to be like that too, Asking, "What would Jesus do?" in this situation and then doing it, being honest, having compassion, avoiding sin, being pure, counting on God's grace, etc

Galatians 5 v 16 – 25 Mathew 5 v 16 John 13 v 15 John 14 v 15 - 16



The 7 **Soul Food** Groups as your guide for planning Youth Ministry

Look at each area and ask your team, “What can we do to incorporate this area in to our youth ministry?”

Remember that youth ministry can happen in a variety of contexts including the home, the school, worship, youth group, Bible study groups, mentoring partnerships, Christian friendship networks, wider church events etc

GOD AND I: enjoying an intimate relationship with God

Incorporate this soul food through * devotions in your gatherings *small group Bible studies *coaching and follow up support for personal faith practices using The Fridge or other resources *testimonies and sharing times * question and answer panels on God topics * teach and practice a variety of prayer patterns in group time which they will be able to use on their own at home. (pgs 32 – 33 of The Fridge) * give Christian families resources they can use together to grow closer to God at home * help your young people experience a wide variety of ways to connect with God which might suit all kinds of different personalities – the energetic and the reflective, people who prefer to see things, hear things or do things etc

HANGING OUT: cultivating healthy and authentic relationships

* have a group covenant for how you will all treat each other. Refer back to it to keep relationships going well * run a series on relational issues such as “How to be an excellent Christian friend” * ask the girls to run a session for the guys on “How girls like to be treated” and the boys to give the girls a session about “How guys like to be treated” * model encouragement and caring to each other
* give training in listening skills or conversational skills *Use exercises from this section of The Fridge with in youth group time

SERVING OTHERS: using gifts and abilities in a life of sacrificial service

*plan group service projects * encourage your group to plug in to church / community service projects that make sense for your group
* set individual service challenges such as the “Random Acts of Kindness” exercise (See The Fridge pg 96) * delegate jobs to people with in your meetings such as bringing or serving supper – give everyone the opportunity to serve * Help families of young people take up service projects together * encourage people to serve others with in the groups they belong to outside the church *develop service as a life style habit *give them service rolls at worship such as welcoming at the door, taking up the offering etc..



DOING CHURCH: belonging to and participating in a community of faith

Build or strengthen links between your young people and the worshipping congregation by * simply inviting them to come to church for all the Sundays of a month. Perhaps you could meet early for a pizza tea and then go in to church together * invite church people with great faith stories to share, to join the youth group one night and tell their stories * invite cool church people to visit youth gatherings and to chat together in small groups about faith, life, the church etc * run worship as a group and use the preparation time as a way to teach about the elements of worship * when you do service activities, help them to understand that this is doing church too * Offer them opportunities to use their talents and spiritual gifts with in the church in meaningful ways...

LIVING LIFE: being sustained, recharged and empowered by the Holy Spirit

Help your young people be sustained by The Spirit by * teaching them about The Holy Spirit's role in the Christians life * including small group prayer times in your meetings * giving examples of ways to be open to God's guidance * have sharing times where people talk about how they experienced God during the week * have them do a "Count your blessings" exercise to realize how many great things God has given them * run a mini retreat for them (pg 188 and 164 in The Fridge) * encouraging them to encourage each other and to be blessings to one another * discussing the REAL life issues that your young people struggle with and give them ways to manage the temptations they face...

ON A MISSION: actively engaging in mission

You can include this in your program by * helping them to identify with God's love for people so that they can understand why God wants them to be on about his missions * identify needs and meet them in God's name * run practice sessions on faith sharing * encouraging them to pray for their non church friends to find faith and for God to give them opportunities to share their faith * Hold "Bring a friend" nights at Youth Group or church* have regular sharing times about God's involvement in their lives. The more often we talk about our faith the more natural it becomes * use the map of the world prayer exercise from The Fridge pg 202 - 203 * encouraging them to be involved in leadership with children's ministry or peer ministry * tapping in to wider church mission experiences through Uniting in Mission or by contacting our churches Social Justice advocates and asking how your group might help others * Do the 40 Hour Famine Together * Have an Amnesty International information and letter writing night..

WHO I AM: developing a Christ-like character

This can be included in your ministry by * running Bible study sessions on Jesus as our ultimate role model * encouraging people to read the gospels (The table on pg 20 of The Fridge could help and also the reflection questions on pg 236) either on their own or together * encourage them to live like Jesus (pg 237 will help) and set "Jesus" home work where they let Jesus live through them to bless others * helping them to confront and deal with their own areas of weakness and vulnerability (pgs 244 – 249) * reflect on The Fruit of The Spirit * introducing them to the practice of journaling. Set questions to reflect on each day about their progress in developing a Christ Like Character which they work through for a month



