

# Chapter

# 13

## Resources, Methods, and Strategies

### What Are Resources?

God puts opportunity before us consistently, day in and day out. Too often we fail to recognize it for what it is. The key is to see things for what God may be trying to say to us. In considering resources, everything and anything is subject to God's purposes.

#### Resources Are Media

- Books of programs, games, and great ideas; public libraries and other church libraries.
- Videos, cassette tapes, compact discs.
- Computers, the Internet, CD-ROMs, faxes.
- Movies, television, plays, drama, and poetry.

#### Resources Are People

- Preachers and teachers.
- Youth workers and youth.
- Writers of poetry and journals.
- Tellers of experiences, thoughts, and reflections.
- Professionals and experts in the community and congregation.

#### Resources Are Natural

- Trees, wind, thunder, lightning, songbirds.
- Rising and setting of the sun and the moon; the twinkling stars as we ponder God's universe.
- Tactile feelings of liquids, heat, breezes, pain, body movement, ice, and food.

Resources are everywhere we look and everywhere we touch, feel, and think. With an abundance of potential resources around us, ask,

“What can they do for us? How do they help us in our youth ministry? What does God want us to learn? What resources has God provided?”

The best resources are those which:

- Engage youth physically and actively in learning.
- Invite youth to participate by making a contribution and a difference. Too often youth feel they make the effort to attend, but their presence doesn't seem to make a difference, and no one cares.
- Invite a personal response from the participants: thinking, feeling, imagining, questioning, mind-stretching, spiritual questing, decision-making, growing in faith, and taking action.
- Enable youth to make a difference, sharing a bit of who they are and what they know for the good of the whole community.

## Using Resources

What can resources provide? Think of resources as you would an encyclopedia. To make an encyclopedia work, you must already have an idea of what you want to find—a topic, theme, or subject. No one walks into class and begins teaching by reading from a book labeled “Volume A to D.” That’s not how an encyclopedia is supposed to work. We have to have some sense of where we want to go. Then we have to open its volumes and look for things that equip, share, and bring light to what conforms to our focus.

Anyone can use resources effectively; age is no limitation. All that is required is patience and research. Don’t overlook other people as a place to get great ideas. Try your hand at identifying a need that fits within the goals of the ministry; name a theme; and begin! In no time you can develop a knack for pulling various ideas and activities into an engaging time.

**In considering any resource, follow these steps:**

- Approach resources with some notion of a goal—a theme, an idea, or a topic that you know is germane and of interest to them and that serves your overall vision.
- Determine the big idea in the materials or suggested activity. Can you state it in your own words? Put another way, “What do you want to get across? Where do you want to go?”
- How can the core idea be best communicated with our particular teens? Think about the youth individually. Then think about which method(s) will best communicate the core idea to them.

- Plan, but stay flexible. Have a plan for opening, continuing, and ending. Aim for widespread participation. Adapt resources to fit the amount of time available. Don't try to cram in too much. If the discussion takes an unplanned turn, let it go that way as long as it seems helpful and is not too far from the goal.

## Selecting Resources

In selecting resource materials that will be effective for your youth group, ask the following questions:

- Is the resource truly suited to your youth? Is it too simple, or is it over their heads? Is it designed for the age level using it? Does it duplicate content or methods recently used? Is it relevant to the concerns of your youth? Does its focus fit your vision of youth ministry?
- Will the resource truly help you achieve your goal? Will it really help move you in the general direction of your overall vision? Does it do what you want to do?
- How much adaptation or reworking will the resource require? Program materials often have to be adapted to fit specific needs and situations. Adaptation is commendable because it shows that the youth using the resource are trying to make it truly their own. But large-scale reworking can be time-consuming. If this route is necessary, be sure the project is worth it. If not, look for another resource better suited to your theme.
- Will your budget stand the expense? Obviously, some resources cost more than others, so weigh them carefully.
- If the resources are not published by The United Methodist Church, ask these questions: Is the resource biblically, theologically, and educationally sound? Does it reflect a theology consistent with that of The United Methodist Church? Ask your pastor or Christian educator to help you evaluate the resource you are considering.
- One of the strengths in using United Methodist resources is that they are designed and developed under the mandate of The United Methodist Church to be biblically, theologically, and educationally sound. They are by no means the only sound resources available. Other denominations produce excellent resources as well. However, resources produced by The United Methodist Church are designed specifically for use by United Methodists

and can help us learn about ourselves as United Methodist Christians.

- If your group is not clear on the basics of our denomination, what would be required to change that? Using materials that are consistent with United Methodist beliefs requires some basic understanding of what those beliefs are. What procedure should be followed to set up some meetings where these topics are discussed? Is there someone who would be willing and able to teach this material creatively?
- Consider creating your own resources. This takes time and a degree of self-motivation, but it can be rewarding. Test your ideas with others; consult specialists in youth ministry around your area, especially youth, who can serve as listeners.

## RESOURCE PEOPLE

### Pastor

Ask your pastor to help the youth ministry become more involved in the congregation by encouraging youth participation in worship and in the congregation's administrative groups. Your pastor's theological training is a rich source of knowledge for biblical study, and it provides a perspective for discussing current events. Your pastor can be helpful in counseling youth and in helping them develop their own skills as peer pastors or counselors. Get to know your pastor. Reach out to include him or her as a valued member of the congregation's youth ministries.

### Parents

Parents can be more than chauffeurs and cooks. These are people who have a particular interest in the health of the youth ministry and who have experience and skills to share. Get to know the parents of youth in your group, and use their areas of expertise in your programming. While some parents may not be especially interested or supportive, others will connect with your group. How can you get to know these folks?

- Include a rotating parent or guardian representative on your planning team.
- Meet in youth member homes occasionally, perhaps once a month.
- Have a "parent night" once a quarter when youth bring their parent(s) or guardian(s). Activities can include cookouts, recreation, discussion of parent-teen communication, movie or television evaluation, and worship.

- Have a parents' meeting every six months to share your plans for the ensuing six months, with sign-up sheets available for activities that need parental assistance.
- Invite a resource person from the community to speak on an issue of concern to parents of youth.
- Invite a small group of parents to establish a support group for parents of youth that might meet monthly or bimonthly at a time that coincides with a youth meeting.
- Meet with parents or guardians for short-term studies to deal with concerns, such as how to improve communication or how to prepare their youth for the future. Youth may support this by helping with promotion and publicity and by suggesting topics of study that the youth would like parents to consider. This is one way the youth can include ministry to parents as an ongoing program.

### **Other Members of the Congregation**

Your church and community have many adults with diversified skills. A little creative thinking can produce ways to use these people for retreats, meetings, or a short series of classes. Consider the following as a way to begin thinking about this.

- A homemaker can speak on issues of time management.
- Young couples can be resource people for dating and marriage issues.
- A contractor can serve as advisor for a work camp.
- A school counselor can participate in a discussion on occupational futures.
- A judge or attorney can talk on the subject of the law and ethical decision-making.
- Someone from the church finance committee can speak on the matter of money management.
- A physician can help youth understand sexually transmitted diseases and other issues related to sexuality.

## **Methods for Discovering Concerns**

Leading learning experiences that appeal to a variety of learning styles takes planning. Always determine your purpose or goal first. Then choose the method that will best enable you to fulfill your purpose. Many different methods can be used. This list is a sampling of some you may want to consider.

- Incomplete sentences. The beginning of a sentence is given for a person to complete; for example, "I think prayer is like . . ."
- Word associations. One word is given; people are asked to give other words that come to mind and discuss.
- Artistic expressions. List, draw, or paint ideas, concepts, problems, concerns, feelings, or dreams. Feelings and ideas are expressed in original symbols or words.
- Writings. Write your own creeds, prayers, or poetry.
- Spiritual autobiography. Write or draw a spiritual autobiography. Persons write their own faith story with words or symbols or a graph line showing the ups and downs.
- Interviews. Find out a person's or a group's opinion on a given subject. This can be done live or tape-recorded.
- Inventories, checklists, or questionnaires. People are invited to respond to a list of questions or statements compiled before the activity.
- Personal experiences. People are invited to share their own experiences concerning a particular subject.
- Brainstorming. Ideas are expressed verbally with no judgment made about any idea. A time limit is set at the beginning. All ideas are recorded. This enables new ideas to emerge from the group. Evaluation occurs after the time limit has expired.
- Quiz games. Concepts concerning the subject are presented in a game show format.
- Graffiti sheets. These are similar to incomplete sentences. Words or symbols are printed at the top of a large blank sheet of paper or freestanding box. People are invited to respond anywhere on the paper or box.
- Continuum or agree/disagree statements. Designate one end of the room as "agree" and the other end as "disagree." The leader reads aloud controversial statements. People place themselves in proximity to one of the walls to indicate their response to the statements.
- Symbols. Thoughts and feelings are expressed by creating an image with modeling clay, pipe cleaners, wire, and so forth.
- Banners, posters, or buttons. Using paper, fabric, markers, paint, or yarn, illustrate one or more simple ideas.
- Montages. Create a picture by combining several examples from one medium (printed words, photos, magazine ads, and so forth).

- Collages. Create a picture using two or more media (photos, printed matter, paints, fabric, three-dimensional objects, and so forth).

## Methods to Stimulate Discussion

These methods can be used to spark discussions. Use them either as the opening activity or as an exploring activity to help persons deal more in depth with the subject that has been presented.

- Artistic expressions. List, draw, paint, or write in response to a discussion question.
- Open-ended problem situations. Group members are given a situation and must decide what happens next.
- Roleplay. Assume the role of a character in a given situation and act out that character in either a predetermined or a spontaneous way.
- Cartoons and ads. Analyze the messages. Write new messages for the pictures, creating new pictures for the messages. Create an ad or cartoon to express the idea being studied.
- Reaction to art forms, symbols, magazine and newspaper articles, stories, poetry, or music. Use them to stimulate the group's thinking.
- Interpretive dance, mime. Perform movements to words or music to express a particular subject.
- Demonstrations. Enable the group to observe how something functions that is related to the subject.
- Acrostics. This is an arrangement of words in which certain letters spell another word.
- Case studies. Express opinions in response to questions about what the characters said or did in the example being studied.
- Questions and answers. Ask questions that are thought-provoking to stimulate thinking.

## Discussion Groupings

- One-to-one. Pairs share personal experiences or interview each other.
- Groups of three: participating and observing. One gives his or her opinion; one asks questions or listens; and the third observes the other two. Group members switch roles until each has experienced each role.

- Quiet meeting. The group sits in silence until one person feels moved to speak.
- Circular response. Going around the circle, each person in the group is invited to speak. Persons may pass. Everyone is given a chance to speak once before anyone can speak twice.
- Debate. Present arguments for and against a subject.
- Fishbowl. The group sits in a large circle with several people sitting in an inner circle. People in the outer circle observe, while people in the inner circle speak. Outer circle participants are encouraged to speak by placing an empty chair in the inner circle where they can sit or by tapping an inner circle person on the shoulder to exchange places with the outer circle person.
- Small-group discussion. This is for groups of three to six people; each group discusses for a set period of time, then reports back to the total group.

## Top Ten Ways to Lead a Discussion

- Do your homework. Try to be as informed as your participants.
- Get people to sit in a circle; don't let anyone sit outside the circle.
- Good discussion won't happen if the group is too large. Break it down so there are no more than eight to ten maximum in each group.
- Fashion questions so individuals can share their knowledge before you start telling them what you know.
- Learn to offer feedback in ways that clarify and emphasize a person's main point.
- You don't have to agree with everything, but you do have to be cordial and understanding.
- Don't ask questions that can be answered with a yes or a no. If you get that response, always follow up by asking, "Why?"
- Don't let anyone dominate the conversation.
- Don't single anyone out or put anyone on the spot, especially those who are quieter.
- Summarize the main thoughts or any decisions the group makes before departing.



## Presenting Information

You can present content in many ways other than by giving a lecture. Use the methods listed in this section to help your group interact with the subject being studied.

- Simulation games. A life situation is simulated in a game format.
- Field trips. The group visits a particular location to gather information, to investigate a problem, or to be confronted with a real-life situation.
- Learning centers. Places where youth interact with resources are selected to help them gain better understanding of the subject. This may include listening, viewing, reading, or other activities.
- Timelines. Chronological listings of past and/or projected events related to the subject are shared.
- Charts and maps. Reproductions of information related to the subject are presented in a concise form. This shows how different aspects of the subject are related to each other.
- Quotations, stories, or case studies. Make selections to present information and/or insight about the subject in a thought-provoking way.
- Puppets. Use them to help hold a group's attention while presenting information.
- Interpretative dance, mime.
- Skits and dramatic readings. Brief dramatic presentations are either written by the group or are acted out from a script provided.
- Roleplaying.
- Then and now. A historical person in costume "visits" the group. Or the group reads about a historical situation and then rewrites it in a modern setting, perhaps acting it out.
- Shadow playing. This involves performing a pantomime or story play behind a white sheet, with the playing area backlit so that the audience sees the action as shadows projected on the sheet.
- Audiovisuals. Show video clips, movies, or pre-taped youth presenting an idea.
- Visuals (art, overheads, bulletin boards, and so forth).
- Recordings (compact disks or cassette tapes).
- Directed listening, reading, or viewing. Listen, read, or view, according to guidelines suggested by the leader.
- Research and share. Have a person find particular information about a subject and then share it with the group.

- Soapbox. Express a problem, peeve, or point of view for a limited amount of time (perhaps two minutes).
- Panel or panel forum. Two or more people with special knowledge of a subject hold a conversation guided by a moderator in front of the group. It becomes a panel forum when the audience directs questions to the panel.
- Symposium. Several speakers deliver short addresses on the subject or related subjects.
- Resource person. A person with extensive knowledge of a subject shares with the group. He or she may or may not try to persuade the group to his or her point of view.
- Lecture or illustrated lecture. A carefully prepared oral presentation is made by a qualified person. The presentation may be illustrated with visuals.

## For More Help

For information about United Methodist curriculum resources and program materials, call the toll-free Curricu-U-Phone help line (800-251-8591) or e-mail [curricuphone@umpublishing.org](mailto:curricuphone@umpublishing.org).

Cokesbury is the official distributor of resources for The United Methodist Church. Visit your local Cokesbury store or the Cokesbury website ([www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)). The toll-free Cokesbury order number is 800-672-1789.

Many annual conferences have a media library from which you can check out videos, tapes, and other resources. Check with your conference council on ministries office to see if a media library is available in your area.

*Let's Talk About It: How to Lead Discussions With Youth (SkillAbilities for Youth Ministry)*, by David Miles Burkett. Published by Abingdon Press. Available through Cokesbury (800-672-1789).