

Youth for Christ Canada National Leadership Conference

PRE-WORK PACKAGE



National Leadership Conference PRE-WORK PACKAGE

80th Anniversary Booklet

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the 80th Anniversary Booklet. During our first facilitated session at the Leadership Conference our focus will be on ensuring a shared understanding of the history of Youth For Christ in Canada and where we are at today as a ministry and an association. The 80th Anniversary Booklet is a great overview of the history of YFC through the past 8 decades.



80 Years of
YFC CANADA



Youth for Christ
Youth Unlimited™



Jeunesse pour Christ
Jeunesse sans limite™

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR



On December 30, 1944, several thousand young people gathered at Massey Hall in Toronto for an evangelism rally that played a role in reshaping the landscape for Canadian youth and young people around the world. Eighty years later, Youth for Christ continues to impact the lives of young people across Canada in almost every setting imaginable, including youth centres, concert venues, skateboard parks, schools, camps, and coffee shops from Vancouver Island in the west to Halifax in the east.

Over all these years, YFC has been **“Geared to the Times, Anchored to the Rock,”** doing anything, by all possible means, to reach as many youth as possible. We have been known as innovators, missionary entrepreneurs, and collaborators in communities, bringing the body of Christ together with a common goal of reaching youth for Christ.

One key component of Youth for Christ which has carried through the years is the importance of relationships; relationships with youth, colleagues, volunteers, financial and prayer partners, like-minded ministry partners, and, above all, God. We would not be here without the work of those who went before us to pave the way. Because of this legacy, and God’s faithfulness, 80 years later, YFC is still reaching youth with the Good News of Christ!

We are so grateful for your support and partnership and look forward to what God has for us as we continue to serve young people across the country while remaining **“Geared to the Times, Anchored to the Rock.”**

Grace and peace,

Tim Coles
National Director
YOUTH FOR CHRIST CANADA



Geared to the Times

Anchored to the Rock



OUR MISSION

Every young person living fully in Christ

“Christ calls us to a ruggedness and a non-conformity that appeals to young people psychologically as well as spiritually. That is what Youth for Christ is doing. It is calling young people out of the crowd to be willing to stand and be counted for Jesus.”

- DR. BILLY GRAHAM



“Members of YFC have helped me feel more comfortable, accepted, and strengthened in the Christian community, as well as in my faith. I have often felt like an outsider, but they have played a part in making me believe I am welcome into Christ’s family as I am.”

- YOUTH, YFC | YOUTH UNLIMITED
PRINCE GEORGE

80 YEARS



Youth for Christ has a distinctive history of youth evangelism. In the early 1940s during World War II, many young men, mostly ministers and evangelists, held large rallies in Canada, England, and the United States to reach young people. These rallies featured contemporary music, unique themes, and dynamic preaching. The first Canadian rally was held on December 30, 1944, at Toronto's Massey Hall.

As the hunger for God's Word grew, it became evident that there needed to be someone to coordinate this movement, providing leadership,

developing strategy and coordinating speakers, musicians, and locations. Beginning in dozens of cities at the end of World War II, YFC quickly organized into a national movement. **Billy Graham** became YFC's first full-time staff member.

The forties were the spectacular early years of Youth for Christ with large rallies that surfaced across the country resulting in hundreds of youth responding to the claims of Christ. Led by the charisma of its first president, **Charles Templeton**, Youth for Christ was acclaimed by TIME Magazine as the "Religious Story of the Year" in 1946. Templeton and his band of young evangelists travelled across Canada, impacting youth by the thousands for Christ.



16-year-old Young Australia sings at Youth-for-Christ rally with Arthur Day (center) at right. Singers, musicians, and speakers exchange talent with other artists. There are changes in program each week.

With concert stage in Massey Hall the background with a picture of Christ. Artists are seated through with regulars taking to long audience of high price but stage spectacles and artists are career prospects.

Shelburne is led by the American, J.L. who takes songs from above, distributed by networks, leaving on full audience participation, works hard at beginning of rally to meet an audience with Christ, Young evangelists.



1950s

The fifties were characterized by the call to world evangelization, as **Evon Hedley** led YFC in Eastern Canada and Calgary's **Bob Simpson** provided leadership in the West. This period was marked not only by the continued focus on the "rally" but also by a strong call to challenge Christian youth to reach the world for Christ. *World Vision* rallies and evangelistic campaigns were held across the nation. It was during this period that the **YFC Bible Club** movement was born on our nation's high school campuses.



VANCOUVER, B.C., PLANNED . . . a one-month Youth Crusade with Evangelist Wes Aarum and saw it extended another month. Above photo shows the crowd on May 5 at the first closing date.

Toronto's Massey Hall was filled every Saturday night with rallies. Churches, town halls, theatres, and high school auditoriums became centres of Youth for Christ activities across the country.



1960s

The sixties marked a focus on Canada's youth, led by the "evangelistic heart" and commitment of YFC Canada's President, **Wes Aarum**. It saw the emergence of *Teen Team Ministry*, where young people travelled overseas to share the gospel of Christ in music and message to the world's expanding youth population. The teen talent contests drew youth by the thousands to Winona Lake, Indiana. **Youth Guidance**, started by YFC Victoria's **Gordie McLean**, began a ministry to Canada's troubled teens.



Hamilton YFC Male Quartet

you and your
fellow teens are most
IMPORTANT

If the world is going to be changed—and it must
be if we're going to survive—then you teen-agers
will have to change it.

This is why you are important.

And the decisions you make today in your own life
will someday affect an entire world. If you
give in to the selfish materialism of this world (or worse yet,
the godless materialism of the Communists), then
the future is gone already.

But if you get your hands on the kind of Christian
ideals that have brought freedom to men—if you
dare to believe that life is more than "eat, drink,
and be merry, for tomorrow we die"—then there is yet
hope. You'll meet these ideals in the pages of this
magazine. Please take them to heart.

YOUTH FOR CHRIST



The YFC Bible
Club changed to
the **Campus Life**
format in an effort
to reach out to
Canada's youth
subculture.

First Issue of
Campus Life Magazine,
October, 1965



The late sixties and early seventies saw missionary statesman **John Teibe** as President. John, who had been used by God to establish YFC India, led in a period of great youth involvement in communicating the message. *The Potter's Clay* went to South East Asia and the *Power & Light Company* crisscrossed Canada presenting the message of Christ in hundreds of high school campuses.



NLC Pre-work Package

17 of 42



1970s

The late seventies saw the high-energy leadership of **Brian Stiller** as President. His vibrant leadership featured an emphasis on the recruitment and training of young men and women in developing excellence in leadership. This period saw a new commitment to the church through a Church Youth Ministry Resource Service and a high-profile effort to engage the general public through television, including the prime time specials *The Johnny Cash Youth Special* and *Where Have All The Children Gone?* which resulted in a broader awareness of youth needs.





Bob Simpson was elected as President in 1984. This chapter was characterized by a strong sense of vision and a “*whatever it takes*” philosophy to reach Canada’s lost and un-reached youth. The

launching of a ministry to Junior High youth, the beginnings of a street-level outreach, and the re-emergence of the original rally in the form of the “*large event*” are highlights of the *Breakthrough by '92 Strategic Plan*. This plan allowed Youth for Christ to expand into many new population areas with new initiatives of ministry such as drop-in centres and culture-driven ministries.



There was a focus on training through events and the production of materials to facilitate youth evangelism through programs such as *Today's Teens Conference* in the East and *God in Touch* in the West.

1980s



1990s

The first **Summer Institute** occurred in Canada with the goal to equip and train new staff with the tools and resources to work with youth. Street outreach programs and mobile youth centres started throughout the country as another way to connect with young people.

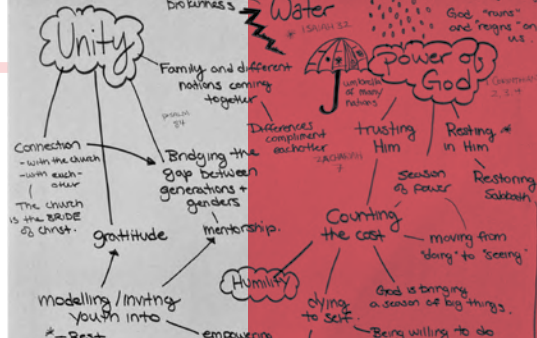


In the late '90's something amazing took place. The phenomenal grass-roots movements of the past saw a resurgence! Under the creative networking and support of many Chapters in Canada, a Satellite program emerged bringing the “*large city*” ministry to smaller communities across the country. These Satellite programs, sponsored by the supporting Chapters, offered creative ministry that met the local needs of youth.



The late 1990's and early 2000's was a difficult period. YFC Canada had a number of leaders, each bringing with them a unique set of gifts according to the needs of the times. It was a time of re-defining, as we asked God to help us to understand the next chapter in the God Story for YFC. As YFC founder Torrey Johnson once said, “*The past was great... the present is glorious... and the best is yet to come.*” YFC Canada has a rich heritage, but the future is as “*bright as the promises of God.*”

The National Office had been through a revolving door of leadership in the late 1990's and the early 2000's. In 2006, the YFC board hired **Dave Brereton** as the National Director. Dave's arrival brought fresh hope; Dave had a long history with YFC (*including serving as Executive Director of Montreal YFC; and National Board Chair*).



YFC continues to impact the lives of young people across Canada in almost every setting imaginable, including youth centres, concert venues, skateboard parks, schools, camps, and coffee shops from Vancouver Island in the West to Halifax in the East.



2010s

Tim Coles continues to lead the movement of Youth for Christ. Tim implemented the YFC Playbook, guided the organization through a Global Pandemic, and is instrumental in deepening and building partnerships with like-minded youth ministries.



2020s



Under the umbrella of the National Office, **Affiliate Chapters**, similar to Satellite programs, were launched in smaller communities across the country. YFC Canada launched our official **Global Engagement Department** to build partnerships with YFC nations around the world.



After many years of serving at a local Chapter and on the National Team, **Tim Coles** became the National Director in 2018.

YFC continues to impart God's love, truth, and hope to young people from all walks of life, regardless of race, faith, economic level, or cultural background.

2000s

The first four years under Dave's leadership were largely spent building relationships with Executive Directors across the country, building up the National Team, working on establishing relationships with potential financial partners, serving the YFC family, and a refocusing on the Great Commission. Dave implemented a **Day of Discernment** (*now known*

as the Day of Prayer) that takes place before each National Ministry Conference and developed **YLAB (Young Leaders Advisory Board)** for staff under 35 years of age. He also placed a high emphasis on staff resiliency and care, which is still in place today.



We believe that transformed youth have the opportunity to transform communities, our country, and the world. We engage and equip youth to know and follow Jesus, and our mission is to see **every young person living fully in Christ.**



Change Conference joined YFC Canada, and large youth rallies in local churches started up again. We are working in neighbourhoods across the country with youth coming from diverse backgrounds and facing unique challenges. Our hope is that by cultivating relationships with caring adults who will mentor and cheer them on, they will be able to bring about positive change to our communities – both now and in the future.



"I've always been so worried about what everyone thinks of me, and did everything I could to make sure I didn't disappoint anyone. I was so worried about standing out or being different. I didn't know why I was placed on this earth. This weekend (at *Change Conference Toronto*) I got to be unapologetically myself. I jumped, danced, I raised my hands during worship, and I wasn't thinking about everyone looking at me. God took away all my anxiety in that moment so I could be completely fixated on Him. This weekend changed my relationship with God, but also my relationship with myself. I'm ready to spread the word, and to tell everyone how amazing Jesus is. I now know I was made on purpose for a purpose for such a time as this. I think I can speak for my whole generation when I say we're all confused about who we are. You guys are doing an amazing job of meeting us where we're at, understanding us, making us feel validated, and treasured. So I truly thank you from the bottom of my heart."

- CHANGE CONFERENCE 2022 TORONTO PARTICIPANT



THANK YOU

for your partnership with **YFC Canada!**

Because of your support, we are able to serve youth in communities across the country.



If you would like to make a donation to YFC Canada

Visit yfc.ca/donate

Mail a cheque payable to **Youth for Christ Canada**
#308 – 8047 199 St, Langley BC V2Y 0E2 Canada

Call 1 800 899 9322 ext 2



Leave behind a legacy of faith.

One of the greatest gifts you can leave for the next generation is a legacy of faith. Would you consider leaving a legacy gift to Youth for Christ? We have a friend of the ministry who believes strongly in legacy giving and has generously covered the cost of our legacy program on your behalf, therefore creating an estate plan is complimentary for YOU!

Contact **Advisors with Purpose**
to get started on your own
personalized plan for your will
1 866 336 3315 or
plan@advisorswithpurpose.ca

Our partners at Advisors with Purpose can help. Their knowledgeable and experienced advisors can help you understand how to minimize taxes and fees while still providing for the people and charities you care about. We promise complete confidentiality; there is no obligation, and no one will try to sell you anything. Will you leave a gift of legacy for future generations to ensure that the youth of tomorrow will continue to hear about God's love through the ministry of Youth for Christ?



YOUTH FOR CHRIST CANADA

#308 - 8047 199 Street

Langley BC V2Y 0E2 Canada

TOLL FREE 1 800 899 9322

TEL 604 637 3400 FAX 604 243 6992

EMAIL info@yfc.ca YFC.CA



**Canadian Centre for
Christian Charities**

Supporting ministries in a complex world

A chartered nation of
Youth for Christ International



WE SEE THE HOPE AND POTENTIAL IN EVERY YOUNG PERSON

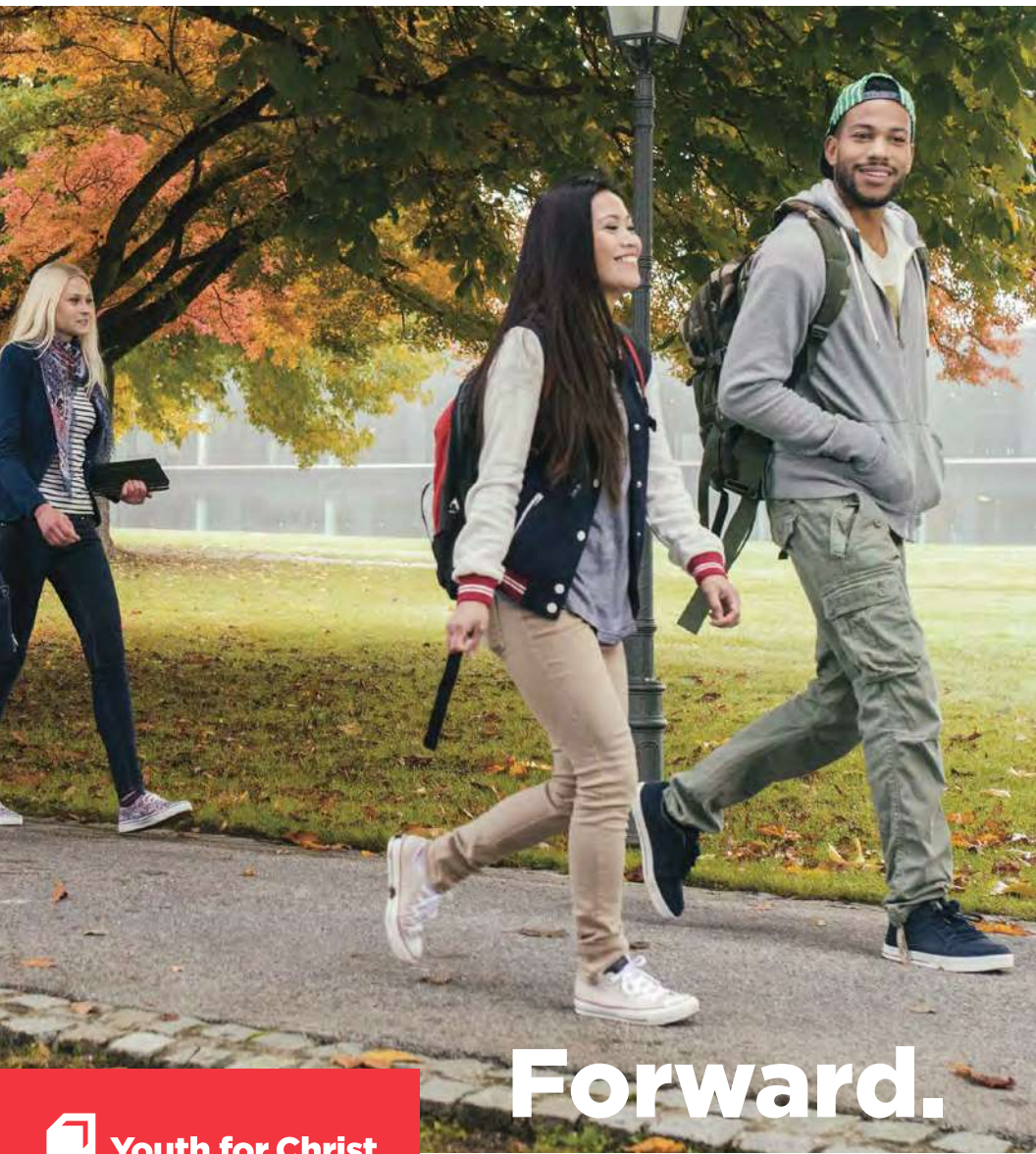
National Leadership Conference PRE-WORK PACKAGE

Playbook

Please take some time to reflect on our “Forward. Together. Playbook”. In October 2018, YFC Executive Directors from across Canada gathered in Quebec City to answer four critical questions:

1. Why do we exist? (mission / vision)
2. How do we behave? (values)
3. What do we do? and;
4. How will we succeed? (strategic anchors)

We reached these statements with complete unity and they were adopted by the National Board in March 2019 as our “Playbook” of strategic statements. It remains our prayer that these statements guide every decision in programming, hiring, partnerships, and branding as we seek to see *every young person living fully in Christ* across Canada.



Forward. Together.



Youth for Christ
Youth Unlimited™

PLAYBOOK
OF STRATEGIC
STATEMENTS



FORWARD. TOGETHER.

On December 30, 1944, thousands of young people gathered at Massey Hall in Toronto for an evangelism rally that played a role in reshaping the landscape for Canadian youth and young people around the world. Eighty years later, Youth for Christ (YFC) continues to impact the lives of young people across Canada in almost every setting imaginable, including youth centres, concert venues, skateboard parks, schools, camps, and coffee shops from Vancouver Island in the west to Halifax in the east.

Over all these years, YFC has been “Geared to the Times, Anchored to the Rock.” We have been known as innovators, missionary entrepreneurs, and collaborators in communities, bringing the body of Christ together with a common goal of reaching youth for Christ.

Youth for Christ founder, Torrey Johnson, proclaimed during the early years of YFC, “O God, we want this kept on a miracle basis. We want everyone to know that God’s hand is on this movement. We want folks to see that this is too big and too great for any [person] or group of [people] to accomplish by themselves. We want folks to say, ‘GOD DID IT!’”

In October 2018, YFC Executive Directors from across Canada gathered in Quebec City to answer four critical questions: **Why do we exist?** (*Mission/Vision*), **How do we behave?** (*Values*), **What do we do?** and **How will we succeed?** (*Strategic Anchors*).

We reached these statements with complete unity and they were adopted by the National Board in March 2019 as our “Playbook” of strategic statements.

As we enter into the next 80 years, it is our prayer that these statements guide every decision in programming, hiring, partnerships, and branding as we seek to see every young person living fully in Christ across Canada.

Forward. Together.



Tim Coles

National Director

Youth for Christ Canada

“As you go, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

MATT 28:19-20a MODIFIED ESV



**WHY DO WE EXIST?
WE EXIST TO SEE...**

Every young person
living fully in Christ

WHY DOES YFC CANADA EXIST?

(*Mission Statement*)

EVERY YOUNG PERSON LIVING FULLY IN CHRIST

EVERY – not only marginalized, not only middle-class, not select ethnicities, but every youth in Canada. This means that we will be purposeful in how we engage different demographics of youth. We can't do this alone.

YOUNG PERSON – this includes elementary as well as high school age youth. It also covers early adulthood as some of the young people that we work with are requiring our care and discipleship beyond their teen years.

LIVING FULLY – this captures the essence of “*life to the full*” as Jesus said in John 10:10 - it is wholistic in every way - fullness of life encompasses our mind, body, soul and spirit.

IN CHRIST – salvation in Christ, experiencing life in Christ, reconciliation through Christ, regeneration in Christ, identity in Christ, disciple of Christ.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

JOHN 10:10 NIV



HOW DO WE BEHAVE?

- Centered on Christ
- Called to the Mission
- Committed to Relationships
 - Seriously Fun

HOW DO WE BEHAVE?

(Values)

These are values that are core to who we are, who we hire, and how we relate to one another and the world outside of Youth for Christ.

CENTERED ON CHRIST

- If our lives are not centered on Christ, we will find it very difficult to do this work. Our lives must be centered on Christ in order to be effective in our ministry and to avoid falling away from our calling.
- If we do not hire staff whose lives are centred on Christ, we risk shifting the priorities of the ministry and the possibility of slowly eroding the mission.
- This stated value captures the essence of the following concepts, “Abiding in Christ,” “Spiritually Vibrant,” “Rooted identity in Christ” and “Saturated in Prayer.”

CALLED TO THE MISSION

- This is not just a job. There must be a sense of calling, a calling to participate in seeing every young person living fully in Christ.
- Our funding model of ministry partner development requires a certain calling or sense of calling for us to be able to cast vision to others and invite them to join us on this journey.
- Each staff person has the opportunity to explore and confirm this calling through the YFC Canada Foundations Credentialing program in their first two years of ministry.

COMMITTED TO RELATIONSHIPS

- Relationships with youth – we have a personal and relational ministry model.
- Relationships with each other – work, serve and minister out of relationship.
- Relationships with ministry partners – not a transactional partnership, rather a relational partnership.
- Relationships in the community – building community relationships and being committed to serving and working out differences in relationship.

SERIOUSLY FUN

- A bit of a play on words here, but seriously, we are fun, and our people need to be fun in order to enjoy all that is YFC | Youth Unlimited.
- We are a fun group, seriously!

A photograph of two young women sitting at a table, laughing heartily. The woman on the left has curly hair and is wearing a maroon hoodie. The woman on the right has long brown hair and is wearing a blue hoodie with the word 'ATTITUDE' visible. In the background, other people are blurred, suggesting a social gathering. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing the text 'WHAT DO WE DO?'.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Engage and equip youth to
know and follow Jesus

WHAT DO WE DO?

Engage and equip youth to know and follow Jesus. **What we do** is different from **why we exist**. *Why we exist*, drives what we do, *why we exist* is the direction we are heading, making the world a better place by... *what we do*. It's just that, it is *what we do*.

ENGAGE – in relationship and proximity, meet youth where they are at, contextualized core ministry programming.

EQUIP – engage in activity and programming that adds value to our relationship with youth, producing fruit such as renewed character, healthy relationships, joyful service, clear purpose.

TO KNOW – clearly communicating the message of the gospel, inviting youth to place their faith in Jesus.

FOLLOW JESUS – engaging youth in discipleship as a lifelong follower of Jesus, with the purpose of having their identity rooted in Christ.

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

GALATIANS 2:20 NIV



HOW DO WE SUCCEED?

- Saturated in Prayer
- Equip Staff and Volunteers
- Contextualized Youth Programming
 - Partnerships

HOW DO WE SUCCEED?

(Strategic Anchors)

In order to succeed, we need to filter our activities through these statements. We know we will be successful when we are saturated in prayer, equip our staff and volunteers, develop contextualized youth programming and do our work in partnership.

SATURATED IN PRAYER

- This has been key to our strategic pillars. We cannot be effective in our mission without being saturated in prayer.
- We need to be seeking the heart of God in our own development and in the development of our teams and ministries.
- We need strategies in place for intentionally seeking God's wisdom, provision and power.

EQUIP STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- Staff Health and Resilient Spirituality
- Foundations Credentialing Training
- Volunteer Training
- Equipping Administrators
- Evangelism & Discipleship Training
- Leadership Development
- Supervision 121 Training
- Arrow Leadership Development

CONTEXTUALIZED YOUTH PROGRAMMING

This is our hallmark: 36 Chapters in 371 communities with over 700 different programs. We seek to develop programs that meet the specific needs of youth in each unique community across Canada.

PARTNERSHIPS

We can't accomplish *"Every young person living fully in Christ"* without partnerships. Youth for Christ is committed to partnering with volunteers, churches, communities, ministry partners, and other like-minded organizations to see the hope and potential in every young person.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2027

In March 2024, the National Board approved the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan:

**“Strengthening health, unity and effectiveness,
for the mission of Disciple-making”**

We believe God is inviting us to create a healthy framework to not only reach a generation with the gospel but fulfill Christ’s invitation to:

“As you go, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20a MODIFIED ESV

At Youth for Christ | Youth Unlimited, our faith has always set us apart. However, coming alongside youth in the name of Jesus and even seeing youth make a decision to follow Jesus does not fully fulfill our mission. We must then ensure they are engaged in meaningful discipleship.

We believe we can do this by making a significant shift in our ministry DNA by committing to strategically:



Shape a Culture of Disciple-making

Enhancing our ability to make disciples who make disciples across the country.



Enhance Formational Learning

Bolstering the health & resilience of our youth workers for effectiveness & longevity.



Engage Canada's Multicultural Diversity

Strengthening YFC to engage with the diverse & multicultural faces of Canada.



Healthy Chapter Framework

Sharing & developing resources to grow healthy Chapters.

Our focus on these key result areas will drive us to be more efficient, more diverse and better equipped to

“Engage and equip youth to know and follow Jesus.”

FORWARD. TOGETHER.

YFC's reason for being is to see **every young person living fully in Christ**. If we talk about these statements when we gather, reflect on them when we are planning and reviewing plans, we will find our efforts mission true and find ourselves participating with God in the building of His kingdom.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

JOHN 3:16-17 NIV

Forward. Together.





Jeunesse pour Christ
Jeunesse sans limite™

Youth for Christ Canada

#308 - 8047 199 Street Langley BC V2Y 0E2 Canada

TOLL FREE 1 800 899 9322 TEL 604 637 3400 FAX 604 243 6992

EMAIL info@yfc.ca yfc.ca



**Canadian Centre for
Christian Charities**

Supporting ministries in a complex world



A chartered nation of
Youth for Christ International

WE SEE THE HOPE AND POTENTIAL IN EVERY YOUNG PERSON

National Leadership Conference PRE-WORK PACKAGE

Discerning God's Will Together

During one of our early sessions together, Scott Moore and Carl Nash will introduce and take us through practicing the principles of 'Discerning God's Will Together'. This model is based on Ruth Haley Barton's book "Pursuing God's Will Together".

- Please review and reflect on the Transforming Centre's "Pursuing God's Will Together" handout which gives a brief overview of the model.
- We have also included a Transforming Centre article entitled "Discerning God's Will Together: Discovering a Process of Leadership Discernment" which provides additional background to this model if you are interested.
- And for anyone who may be interested in diving even deeper, you may wish to pick up a copy of Ruth Haley Barton's book "Pursuing God's Will Together".
Note: reading the book is optional, it is not expected or required.

BECOMING A COMMUNITY THAT PRACTICES CORPORATE LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT

ESTABLISH YOUR TRUE NORTH

- Shared understanding of what discernment means
- Shared conviction that discernment is the heart of spiritual leadership
- Shared affirmation that discerning and doing the will of God is how **we intend** to lead

THEN **PREPARE EACH LEADER**

- Spiritual Transformation
- Personal Discernment

PREPARE THE COMMUNITY FOR DISCERNMENT

- Values that undergird community
- Practices for opening to God together
- Practices for listening to each other
- A covenant that protects community

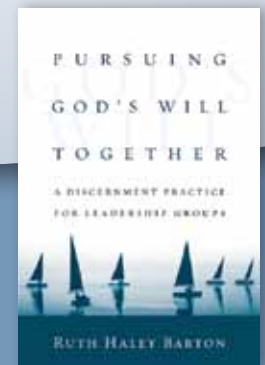
PRACTICE DISCERNMENT TOGETHER

- Get Ready: Preparation
- Get Set: Putting ourselves in a position to be led
- Go: Discerning God's will together

DO: THE WILL OF GOD

as we have come to understand it

© 2012 Ruth Haley Barton. This chart is a representation of the process described in *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (InterVarsity Press).



MOVEMENTS IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT

PURSUINGGODSWILLTOGETHER.COM

GET READY



PREPARATION

- Clarify the question for discernment
- Gather the community for discernment
- Affirm (or reaffirm) guiding values and principles

GET SET



PUTTING OURSELVES IN A POSITION TO BE LED

- Prayer for indifference
- Test for indifference
- The prayer for wisdom
- The prayer of quiet trust

GO



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL TOGETHER

- Set the agenda for listening
- Listen to each other
- Listen to God in silence
- Reconvene and listen again
- Identify and work with options
- Agree together
- Seek inner confirmation
- Affirm God's guidance



DO

THE WILL OF GOD

- Communicate with those who need to know
- Make plans to do God's will as you have come to understand it
- Keep discerning as you do God's will

TRANSFORMING RESOURCES®
A Ministry of the Transforming Center®

© 2012 Ruth Haley Barton. This chart is a representation of the process described in *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups* (InterVarsity Press).





[Article \(https://transformingcenter.org/category/article/\)](https://transformingcenter.org/category/article/)

Discerning God's Will Together: Discovering a Process of Leadership Discernment



[Ruth Haley Barton \(https://transformingcenter.org/author/ruth/\)](https://transformingcenter.org/author/ruth/) | [2 Comments \(https://transformingcenter.org/2005/02/discerning-gods-will-together-discovering-a-process-of-leadership-discernment/#comments\)](https://transformingcenter.org/2005/02/discerning-gods-will-together-discovering-a-process-of-leadership-discernment/#comments)

It was a conversation similar to many I have had with Christian leaders. A pastor from a large church was telling me that his church was going through a major transition as its leaders tried to respond to the growth they were experiencing. They had outgrown their facility (a good problem to have!) so the obvious question was: "Will we add on to our facility or will we start another church?"

But clearly this was only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface larger questions lurked: What should be our emphasis now? Does our mission still capture what we feel called to? Is the leadership structure effective for what is emerging now? Can we keep going this way or will we burn ourselves out, adding a building campaign and more people and activities to our plates?

Sensing the weight that this pastor was carrying, I probed a little deeper and asked, "How are you going about answering these questions? Does your leadership team have a clearly articulated process for discerning God's will in these matters?" A look of disorienting awareness crossed his face as he realized that the answer to the question was no. After recovering a bit, he added "But we always have a time of prayer at the beginning of our meetings."

Understanding Spiritual Leadership

Many of us have a vague idea that there should be something different about our leadership as Christians—particularly if we are leading a church or Christian organization—but the truth is that the difference usually gets reduced to a perfunctory prayer at the beginning of a meeting and sometimes even that gets lost in the shuffle!

What is it, then, that distinguishes spiritual leadership from other kinds of leadership?

The heart of spiritual leadership is discernment: the capacity to recognize and respond to God's will both personally and in community. This is much easier said than done. Discernment requires us to move beyond our reliance on cognition and intellectual hard work to a place of deep listening and response to the Spirit of God within us and among us. It is one thing to rely on what feels like such a subjective approach when it pertains to one's personal life, but it's much riskier when our decisions involve large budgets, other people's financial investments, the lives of multiple staff, reports to high-powered boards, and serving a customer base with its expectations. Is there a trustworthy process for actively seeking God relative to decisions we are making?

The practice of corporate discernment, like any other Christian discipline, is a means of creating space for God's activity in our lives, making ourselves available so that he can

do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The spiritual leader is distinguished by his or her commitment and ability to guide the discernment process so everyone can

affirm together a shared sense of God's desire for them and move forward. Through the practice of discernment in community we open ourselves to the wisdom of God that is beyond human wisdom but is available to us when we ask for it. But discernment does not take place in a vacuum nor by accident. We must first cultivate an environment in which discernment can take place and then enter a process that enables us to actively seek God's will in the decision that we face.

Cultivating an Environment for Discernment

Romans 12:1, 2 indicates that the ability to discern the will of God is a natural by-product of spiritual transformation in community. Paul says, "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Therefore, a community that is dedicated to spiritual transformation provides the environment in which discernment takes place. We cultivate this environment as we commit ourselves to spiritual disciplines, personally and together, that enable us to keep offering ourselves to God for the work that only he can do.

Discernment takes place in the community of those who are committed to spiritual transformation.

When the leaders launching the Transforming Center began meeting together, we gathered first on the basis of our desire to experience spiritual transformation in the context of community. This desire led us to establish rhythms of prayer, Scripture reading, self-examination and confession, solitude and silent listening, worship and intercession that called forth our own transformation. It was out of our commitment to *be together* in ways that were spiritually transforming that we began to discern a calling to *do something together*. It is only as we have struggled to stay true to our own process of spiritual transformation that we have continued to discern what our calling is and stay true to it. We continue to discover, sometimes painfully, that when our commitment to basic spiritual disciplines in community slips, we become muddled in our capacity to be truly discerning: rather than acting from a clear sense of God's desire for us we become driven by our own agendas, rather than experiencing God's peace we become frantic, rather than finding clarity we become lost in a swirl of inner and outer chaos.

Entering into the Process of Discernment

As we cultivate an environment in which discernment can take place, we notice that it begins to happen naturally. However, there are also times for decision-making that call for intentionality and focus in actively seeking God's will. During such times the spiritual leader calls people into the spiritual practice of discernment. Discernment as a spiritual practice is not mechanical nor is it always linear. As we become more comfortable with the process we experience it not so much as a step-by-step procedure but as a creative mix of these dynamic elements:

Ask the right question.

Not all questions warrant a full discernment process. Some questions, such as choosing a computer system, might be answered with a 15 minute, fact-filled discussion. However, there are other questions that require a different level of attention and prayerfulness from the entire leadership group. Even when we think we know what the question is, there might be a larger question lurking underneath it that holds even greater significance for us.

A church's question about the building project might deepen into a question about mission and values and whether a new building might or might not help us stay true to these. What starts out as a meeting to set strategy gives way to the deeper question of whether we are pushing our own agenda or whether God is really opening up new opportunities. What begins as a question about event scheduling raises a more far-reaching concern about pace of life and whether or not we are working and living together in such a way that we honor true human limitations and create space in our lives for loving God and others. Thus, discernment begins with listening for the deeper question.

Involve the right people.

It is amazing how we can become so stuck in organizational "silos" that we overlook those who might have important contributions to make to the discernment process. In addition to the obvious (the board, the staff, the management team) we might consider:² Who else has gifts of wisdom and discernment that we value? Who has information and experience that might help us? Who has influence that might be able to help us communicate the outcomes of our process to others in an inviting way to the larger community when the time comes?

Establish guiding values and principles.

Discernment with others at the leadership level requires an extraordinary amount of safety in each other's presence along with great clarity about what values govern the process. For the Transforming Center, there are certain values that we have agreed together we will not violate for any reason no matter how expedient it might seem. One of these values is our commitment to trustworthy relationships in community. We have agreed that learning to come together and stay together in unity is our first and most enduring task as we pattern our relationships after Christ's commitment to his own disciples. We do not just assume these things; we talk about them and seek to live into them with great vigor and intent. This means that we are also committed to telling the truth. Beyond the kind of maneuvering and posturing that often takes place in leadership settings, we believe God works through all truth—even truth that seems like it might slow us down or complicate matters or take us into uncharted territory—to bring forth the gift of discernment. Even when the truth is hard, we take great pains to affirm the courage that it takes for each one of us to bring the truth that God has given us to the discernment process. When any one of us has deep reservations or resistance to a particular direction or decision, we trust the Spirit of God in that person and wait for deeper understanding and unity. We have never regretted the decision to honor each other in this way. In fact, God has often used this principle to save us from ourselves! Over time we have come to understand that when we compromise basic values for any reason we have compromised our essence and then we do not have much that is of value to offer others.

Pray without ceasing.

Discernment requires much more than a perfunctory prayer at the beginning of a meeting. In fact, it involves several kinds of praying throughout the entire process. When the question for discernment has been clarified, the community for discernment assembled, and guiding principles have been established, we can begin with a prayer of quiet trust like the one found in Psalm 131 in which the Psalmist acknowledges his utter dependence upon God in the face of matters "too great and too marvelous for me."² A different kind of spirit descends upon us when we enter into decision-making from this stance. When we sense that the process is getting out of hand, that human dynamics are distracting us from real issues, that we are stuck, that we are applying nothing more than human effort to the decision at hand, it can be very helpful for the

leader to call the group back to this prayer of quiet trust along with a little time for silence. This gives us the opportunity to shift back into a position of trust rather than human striving.

We need to also pray for indifference. This is not the kind of indifference that we associate with apathy; rather, it is the prayer that we would be indifferent to everything but the will of God. This can be a very challenging prayer for us to pray because oftentimes we enter into decision-making with strong opinions and more than a little self-interest. Indifference in the discernment process means that I am indifferent to matters of ego, prestige, organizational politics, personal advantage, personal comfort or favor, or even my own pet project. "God's will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else." This takes time, for there is often a death to self that is required before we can see God's will taking shape in our lives. But it is well-spent, because otherwise the discernment process becomes little more than a rigged election!

When we have reached a point of indifference, we are finally ready to pray for wisdom which God promises to bestow on us generously when we ask. The prayer for indifference is an important pre-requisite to the prayer for wisdom because the wisdom of God is often foolish to man; indifference to matters of our own ego, in particular, prepares us to receive this gift.

Listen.

At the heart of the discernment process is the choice and the ability to listen on many levels. First of all we must listen deeply to the experience (s) that caused us to be asking this question in the first place. When the New Testament believers were faced with the question of whether or not Gentiles should be required to be circumcised in order to be saved, they entered into a time of deep listening: to the conversion experience of the Gentiles, to the perspectives of the people who were with them, to the questions and debate of the Pharisees, to Peter's sense of personal calling to the Gentiles, to Paul and Barnabas' descriptions of signs and wonders, to James' exposition of Scripture connecting this experience to the words of the prophets in the Old Testament. Finally, out of all that listening James dared to state what he felt God was saying in it all: that they would not impose any further burden on the Gentiles beyond the essentials of the faith. The listening process had been so thorough that when James summarized it so succinctly, it was clear to everyone that the wisdom of God had been given.

This story illustrates that the discernment process involves a major commitment to listening with love and attention to our experiences, to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit deep within ourselves and others, to Scripture and Christian tradition, to pertinent facts and information, to those who will be affected most deeply by our decisions, to that place in us where God's spirit witnesses with our spirit about those things that are true. When we embark on a true discernment process, we ask: What voices do we need to hear and how do we make sure that we hear them?

Select an option that seems consistent with what God is doing among you.

Discernment does not always come with as much clarity as it did for the New Testament church. When it's not clear, you might select an option or two, seek to improve upon those options so that they are the best they can possibly be and then weigh them out to see which one seems most consistent with what God is doing among you. Questions that help us to weigh out these alternatives are: What is the thing that God is making natural and easy? What brings a sense of lightness and peace even in the midst of challenge? Is there an option that enables us to do something before we do everything?

Seek inner confirmation.

Sometimes in the excitement of a meeting we can get somewhat carried away by what is happening in the moment. We might need to allow people some time apart from the group to become quiet in God's presence, to pray and think, and to notice whether they are at peace with the decisions being made. It is good to take a break (a few minutes, an hour, a day, or even a week) and come back together and check in with each other to see what God is saying to them in their quiet listening. If people are experiencing deep, inner peace with the options you are exploring, then affirm that together. If anyone is still having reservations or experiencing questions or resistance, honor them by listening to what it is they are experiencing and see what God has to say to you in it. Perhaps one element of a particular option that needs to be tweaked or perhaps a larger adjustment needs to be made. Trust God to work through this person's hesitation.

2

Agree together.

Once the leadership group has thoroughly explored the different options, hopefully there is a clarity that emerges which points towards one of the options or some combination of the options as particularly graced by God with wisdom and truth. This is the time when those responsible for providing leadership look at each other and say,

"To the best of our ability, we agree that this particular path is God's will for us so this is the direction we will go." Then we rest in God, thanking him for his presence with us and for the gift of discernment as it has been given.

Now it's time to move forward into planning and implementation, confident, that "the one who has called you will be faithful to bring it to pass."



(<https://app.e2ma.net/app/view:Join/signupId:16869/acctId:9963>)

©Ruth Haley Barton, April 2004. This article is reprinted from a series of articles on transformational leadership published in Christian Management Report (www.CMAonline.org).



Ruth Haley Barton

Ruth (Doctor of Divinity, Northern Seminary) is founder and chief essence officer of the Transforming Center. A teacher, seasoned spiritual director (Shalem Institute), and retreat leader, Ruth is the author of numerous books and resources on the spiritual life including *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, *Sacred Rhythms*, *Life Together in Christ*, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, *Invitation to Retreat*, and *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*.

The purpose of the *Beyond Words* blog is to offer helpful and hopeful content and conversation that strengthens the souls of leaders and the congregations and communities they serve. All comments are monitored and the TC reserves the right to delete those that are not consistent with this goal and purpose. Access our [comments policy \(/transforming-center-comments-policy/\)](/transforming-center-comments-policy/).

National Leadership Conference PRE-WORK PACKAGE

National Team Service List

Knowing that we have had a number of new Executive Directors and Leaders join us in the past couple years and as a reminder for those who have been serving with YFC for many years, we have compiled a list of the various services the National Team offers. Please take a few minutes to review this list. During a couple of our sessions this information will be helpful as we brainstorm and develop practical examples of how we can best live out our desired 'Association' model in order to enhance our shared mission and the role that the National Team plays in supporting this.

National Team Service List

As of September 2025

GOVERNANCE

- The Association / Charter / Religious Order
- Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- YFCI Compliance - Annual Ministry Review (AMR)
- YFC Canada Annual Report
- National Vision / Playbook / Strategic Plan

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

- Legal
- Media
- Crisis / Emergency
- Marketing - YFC | YU Brand Guidelines
- Internal Communications - All Staff, ED, Board Chair, ePray emails
- Information Technology - Website Development & Hosting, Hub Content, @yfc.ca E-Mail, User Names & Passwords, Emergency IT Support
- CRA Best Practice & Compliance
- Accounting & Financial Reporting
- Billing for Chapter Fees, Benefits & Conferences/Events
- National Benefits Program (Manulife)
- HUMI HR System Administration and Training
- Recruitment, Hiring & Onboarding
- Clergy Residence Deduction Guidelines and Support
- HR Guide / Best Practices - Policy Templates
- Risk Management / Abuse Prevention Resources and Templates
- Volunteers Engagement Resources
- New Chapter Development & Expansion - Affiliates
- YFC Canada Foundation

COACHING / MENTORING

- Ministry Partner Development (MPD) Coaching
- Coaching
- Executive Director Coaching
- Mentoring

MINISTRY / PROGRAMMING SUPPORT

- Core Ministries - Best Practices and Networking
- Project Serve
- Global Integration - Chapter-Nation Partnerships, Ministry Agreements
- Change Conference

TRAINING & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Foundations (YFC's Credentialing Program)
- Board Governance Training

- Cultural Integration - Indigenous & Settler Relations, Cultural Awareness / Context, Third Culture Kids (TCK)
- Supervision Training
- Discipleship / Disciple-making - 4 Chair, Study Tours, Discovery Bible Reading
- Executive Director Training
- Momentum Intensive (Ministry Partner Development training for new staff)
- Workshops
- Coaching & Coach Training (Coach Net)

HEALTH & RESILIENCY (Spiritual Growth)

- Guided Retreats - Honeymoon Bay & Kingfisher Bay
- Staff Health and Resiliency support & planning
- Spiritual Direction & Practices
- E-Pray Podcast
- Prayer Ministry

CONFERENCES / MEETINGS

- Regional Gatherings
- National Ministry Conference (NMC)
 - Day of Prayer
- Nationwide Connect
- National Leadership Conference
- Leader Connect Calls
- Event Coordination
 - Hosting Guidelines
 - Registration
 - Communications

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- P2C Scholarship Initiative
- Alpha
- YWC (Youth Worker Community) Luncheons
- Canadian Bible Society

SUBSIDIES

- Guided Retreats (30%)
- Honeymoon Bay Flights
- NMC - Day of Prayer, Travel, SI
- Arrow Leadership
- Diversity (Cultural Staff, YFC Women)