

Vertical habits special project for High School Youth
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The TPC vertical habits project for high school youth was part of a community wide worship training effort. We chose the opportunity to help the congregation examine the individual components of worship for understanding and meaning. We also hoped to help them better understand the relationship between the parts, in terms of moving through the overall narrative of a typical worship service. The entire congregation was invited to a series of lively worship training classes.

For our high school participants, we designed a worship emersion retreat. Here they experienced a series of unusual, highly evocative evening worship services. During the day they participated in discussions about the meaning and purpose of the different parts of worship. They explored scripture through Lectio Divina and broke into small groups learning about worship planning. Their final challenge was to plan and lead the final worship service of the retreat. This worship was a beautiful demonstration of Vertical Habits learning. Following the framework from the Book of Common Worship, they designed a service that was full of depth and meaning- in a form that honestly articulated their relationship with God, and in a style that was a true reflection of their community. Feedback from the kids indicated a renewed interest in worship and significant understanding of what we experience together as a community on Sunday mornings.

The Vertical Habits project allowed the kids to experience unfamiliar worship styles that contained all the components of traditional worship. This made it easier for them to identify the individual parts of worship and to study worship with “fresh eyes”. It allowed them to separate content from style, and to articulate spiritual ideas in their own words.

This ability to examine worship services for substance is particularly important as these teens prepare to leave for study at universities all over the region. We hope that their time with us has provided the foundation for a lifetime of spiritual growth. We hope that they leave their spiritual home with critical thinking skills that equip them to seek substance and meaning within the many new styles of worship they will encounter. We expect they will discover that their relationship with God is not something waiting for them back at their home church, but a relationship that travels with them, sustaining them throughout their life.

Update

Our youth program has redirected the focus of programming from fellowship to worship. Along with traditional bible study, the kids regularly participate in Lectio Divina using the text of the day, lead evening worship and celebrate communion together. The program is experiencing significant growth and is sustained in part by the enthusiastic participation of adult volunteers with no children in the program.