Youth Rites of Passage

Youth have many moments of passage and transition—days to be celebrated. Confirmation is one such moment, a powerful claiming of one’s baptism. Youth groups are also an affirming part of adolescence in the congregational context and Youth Sundays often lift up to the wisdom of young leaders.

Complementary to the wonderful things your congregation may already do, there may be other moments in the lives of youth to hold before God. Particularly in an era when the cultural symbols of coming of age (driving, drinking, and proms) have such mixed messages, the church does well to celebrate with young people as they grow in their responsibility to live and act as adults.

Prayer for Receiving a Driver’s License

This brief prayer may occur at the time of celebrating concerns and celebrations in the congregation. The youth may or may not come forward, which ever would be more comfortable for the youth.

Leader: 

(Name) has received one of society’s symbols for maturity, a driver’s license. As (he/she) comes forward for a time of blessing, let’s celebrate with applause.

Let us pray:

God we celebrate with (Name) today in (his/her) responsibility and new-found mobility. We pray for wisdom in difficult weather conditions, for the courage of convictions, for safety in skids and for the excitement of going new places. This privilege is so easily taken away. Slow us all down, God. We acknowledge that, unlike this license, your unconditional love never needs to be renewed. Give a map to (Name) for the journey into adulthood. Offer patience for the unexpected flat tires of life, keys to your realm, and a fill-up of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Celebrating a 15th or 16th Birthday

As each person approaches this landmark invite him or her to choose to do something in worship. The young person might preach, light candles, read scripture, play, or sing a solo. Each one is invited to write a blessing prayer which will be prayed by the congregation. This prayer might be modeled on the following.

God, we give you thanks for these things of childhood:

(Youth lists things of childhood for which he or she is grateful.)

and for these individuals who have shaped it:

(Youth acknowledges names of significant persons.)

As (Name) goes forward into adulthood we ask your grace.

Give strength for these concerns:

(Youth identifies particular life concerns.)

Accept these gifts for your service:

(Youth identifies his or her particular gifts.)
Bless these hopes:
   (Youth identifies hopes for the future.)
And in all years,
   troubles, joys, gifts, doubts,
hopes, and changing possibilities,
   we confidently claim
your amazing love for (Name),
   through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Litany Celebrating the Gifts of Youth

This litany may be used in a worship service that recognizes the gifts of young people at Confirmation or on occasions such as those above—receiving a driver’s license or a birthday. It may be preceded or followed with a prayer of blessing for the individual youth.

One: We remember Miriam, courageous and clever, to protect her family.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember Jeremiah, who was not too young to become a prophet.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember David, chosen in spite of his youth, anointed for tasks of the future.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember Esther, born to “such a time as this,” resourceful in justice.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember Mary, welcoming an angel, singing a song, bearing a child.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember Jesus in the temple, insisting on the adult questions, the adult answers.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember Jairus’s daughter, brought back to life and possibility.
People: We celebrate the gifts of young people, just coming of age.

One: We remember Timothy, learning from past generations, but kindling his own call.
People: We celebrate the gifts of all young people; we listen to them, learn from them, we expect much and we pray for God’s continuing grace in their lives. Thanks be to God!