



*Adult
Assistant*

&



Chaplain

Pack





Australian Young Christian Students Movement



19th July 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a brief information package for people who are interested in taking on the role of being an Adult Assistant to a YCS Group. The YCS Movement is run for, by and among secondary school students, and yet the Adult Assistants and Chaplains play a vital role in the development of a group.

The first part of this pack, Pages 2 – 9, is general information about the YCS Movement. The second section contains more details about the role of the Adult Assistant.

Please take this opportunity to find out what the Young Christian Students Movement is all about and the extremely rewarding role that you could play in developing the faith and leadership of secondary schools students through being an Assistant to the YCS.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about this Information Pack please contact our National Worker, Devett O'Brien on the following details:

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Thank you for taking this time to find out about YCS.

Yours in Faith,

Ali O'Regan

AYCS National Chairperson

Year 11 Student, Santa Maria College



Y.C.S. Creed

As Young Christian Students we believe in God.
We believe that God created the universe and that we, as part of God's creation, are invited to help complete God's plan.

We believe that the earth has been entrusted to us, to care for, to nurture and to respect. People, as God's creation, have a dignity and worth beyond measure, and deserve to be treated with respect and understanding.

We believe the Holy Spirit empowers us to live active lives following the example of Jesus Christ. We do this through communicating our thoughts, opinions and emotions and accepting and loving each other unconditionally.

We believe that our schools should promote these values through encouraging students to form and question their own opinions and beliefs, and treating each student as a worthwhile individual who has unique needs and talents. Our schools should educate for life.

And we believe that Jesus calls us to live through actions, not just words.

Amen.



YCS Principles

1. The Young Christian Students' Movement of Australia is led for, by and among secondary school students.
2. It is inspired by and wants to live the mission of Jesus Christ among secondary school students.
3. It has a specific task of formation and education of secondary school students.
4. It believes in the Review of Life (it reflects on the encounters of students, judges these encounters in light of their faith and develops action) as its method of education.
5. Its faith in Jesus Christ challenges students to an active response among, with and on behalf of all secondary school students.
6. It commits itself to working for justice and peace, especially among secondary school students.
7. It is a Local, Diocesan, National and International Movement and accepts that it has responsibility at all these levels.



Introduction To YCS

PURPOSE AND VISION

The Young Christian Students Movement (YCS) is an international movement that is run for secondary school students, by the students themselves. The Movement aims to empower students to take action in their own lives, in order to change the world around them in the light of their faith and beliefs.

The YCS is currently active in 6 diocese around Australia and in 85 countries across the world. The Movement was inspired by a young priest named Joseph Cardijn who believed that young people could, and must, be the ones who took action in their daily lives to bring about the Kingdom of God. Therefore YCS has always ensured that students talk, review, plan and co-ordinate the Movement together with other students. Adults are important for supporting the YCS, but they must never run the Movement.

The method developed by Cardijn for doing this is called the *Review of Life*. This method has three main sections: SEE, JUDGE & ACT. Beginning with the See Section, students examine a situation that is happening in their life, challenge each other to look at the impact of the situation on the people involved, and investigate what truly caused it to occur. They then make a judgement about what they have seen. This judgement is reflective rather than critical, students relate the situation to their faith and what they think should be happening. In doing this they are able to decide what their beliefs and their faith are calling them to do. Following from this, in the Act section, the students work out what they would like to change and plan an action to achieve this.

As you would be able to tell, the *Review of Life* can lead to a wide variety of actions being taken by students. This is one of the strengths of YCS because the Movement is always relevant to whatever the concerns of students currently are. Actions can range from very small personal actions, such as talking to someone who is being excluded at lunchtime; to large collective actions such as some of the campaigns that are explained below. It is therefore important to make sure a YCS group has the freedom to be creative in their use of the *Review of Life* and the in actions that they take.



STRUCTURE

The YCS functions at the local, diocesan, national and international levels. The most important level is local, amongst the groups that exist in Schools, Parishes and Communities. Two members of each group represent the group at the diocesan level, these members make up the Melbourne Co-ordination Team.

Then every 6 months there is a meeting of the National Executive. This team is made up of one or two representatives from each diocese. Finally there is the international level, with co-ordination meetings held once a year and a World Council every 4 years. This structure ensures that all members are represented at each level of the Movement.

Where possible the Diocesan Council and the National Executive employ people to work for the Movement. While these workers are obviously not secondary school students, they are employed by students and are always directed by the students of the YCS Movement.



The Three Truths

The Three Truths is something that was used by Joseph Cardijn to explain the mission and spirituality of the YCS Movement. Understanding *The Three Truths* gives an integral understanding of what YCS aims to achieve.

1. THE TRUTH OF FAITH.

We believe that every single human being has a dignity and worth beyond measure. As Cardijn said, we believe that everyone is worth “more than all the Gold in the world.”

The reason that we believe this is because every person was created by God and created in God’s image. And because everyone is created by God, we all have a part to play in creating the Kingdom of God here on earth. When you believe someone is created by God and has a unique role to play in the world, then they are definitely worth more than any amount of money. This is what our **faith** is truly about.

Because everyone has this dignity and worth, each person has the right to be able to live in peace and justice, the right to be free from exploitation and war and hate, and the right to be treated with respect by every other person.

2. THE TRUTH OF EXPERIENCE

The truth of faith (above) is what we believe. But when we look around us we **experience** so many situations where people aren’t treated with that dignity and worth. We see poverty, wars, lies, huge gaps between the rich and the poor, racism, unjust treatment of refugees, consumerism, people who only care about material things, and generally a world where money is worth more than people.

In the student world we can see discrimination against young people, pressure for exams, boredom, bullying, unacceptable student/teacher ratios, and schools where students have no “say” in how things are done.



In each of these situations we see or feel a contradiction between our faith and our experience. And every time we see a contradiction, our faith calls us to do something about it, to play our part in building the Kingdom of God.

3. THE TRUTH OF METHOD

In order to really change the contradictions we as students need a **Method** and a **Movement**.

The Movement must be organised and committed to its mission. The YCS is that movement, our mission is to take actions that can overcome these contradictions so that what we experience is equal to what we believe should be happening. If we take actions on our own we can fix part of the problem, but by working in a Movement that is for all students across the world, we can work on fixing the causes of these problems.

We also need to have a “method” which is used by this Movement. And that method is the Review of Life. This method was developed by Cardijn based on the Three Truths as a way to overcome these contradictions in our everyday lives. The best YCS actions come from the Review of Life because they are based in our real experience as well as what we truly believe through our faith and our values.



Review of Life

Forms students to actively live out their faith in their everyday lives.

It gives students a practical tool to allow them to live out their role in creating the Kingdom of God.

Makes faith relevant because it starts from the real life experiences of students.

Ensures that there is a balance between reflection and action.

Most importantly, it is a tool that is part of a long-term formation process. It forms young people to develop their faith, to live their faith, and to change the world.

But it doesn't just do this for the here and now, it trains them to do this every day for the rest of their lives.



Review of Life Questions

SEE

The SEE Section is about finding out exactly what is happening in a situation that the students want to talk about.

1. What exactly happened? What was your action in response? (the facts)
2. What caused this to happen and why? (the causes)
3. How were people affected? (the consequences)

JUDGE

The JUDGE Section is about applying our faith and beliefs to the situation and developing an idea about what we are called to do.

4. What do you think about this?
5. What does your faith say about this situation? What would Jesus do here?
6. What should be happening? (the ideal situation)

ACT

The ACT Section is about deciding what we can do to change the situation in the way that our faith and beliefs are calling us to.

7. What exactly do you want to change? (Long term aim)
8. What action could you take this week that would be a worthwhile step towards achieving this change? (Short term action)
9. Who else could you involve in you action?



Holistic Formation

One of the key elements of the YCS Movement is that it provides students with holistic formation. This can be broken into two main parts:

1. A balance between action and reflection.
2. Life long formation

Action and Reflection

Through using the Review of Life, YCS aims to get students to reflect on their lives in the light of their faith and beliefs and then challenges them to act in the way their faith calls them to.

It is often easier to just focus on action or just focus on reflection, but if the two aren't joined together then we miss key aspects of who Jesus calls us to be.

One of the great things that this means is that YCS can cater for students starting at a broad range of points of understanding or identification with their faith. For example, if students already identify as Christians or have a relationship with Jesus then being involved YCS can help them develop that further by encouraging and empowering them to act in the courageous, loving and challenging way that Jesus did.

Alternatively YCS can also be attractive to students who see something wrong in the world and want to make a difference. Often this might be because of more 'humanist' beliefs, but through the Review of Life and doing Gospel Reflections they can see that the way Jesus spoke and acted actually is an inspiring example of the things they believe in and this can show them that Jesus and the Gospel are relevant to their lives and the world today.

Life Long Formation

Another key aspect of YCS formation is that it is a long-term process, with long-term results. We aim to train students to form and question their own opinions and beliefs and to live those beliefs out in their everyday lives. This involves them taking actions and making a difference, right now. But just as importantly, it means they are learning to do that every day for the rest of their lives. And this isn't something that can be achieved through one event, or one retreat, or even over a month or two. The events, retreats and programs have their place in attracting and engaging people but they can't replace ongoing formation.



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It is this life long formation, which produces committed Christian leaders both now and well into the future that really sets the YCS method apart in terms of ongoing benefit. Pope Benedict 16th has called for a 'new generation of apostles' and YCS is about engaging young people and providing them with the formation and training that is needed to become a life-long apostle.



A Student Run Movement

YCS is a Movement that is run **for**, **by**, and **among** secondary school students. This is a crucial part of what the YCS aims to do.

In order to form committed Christian leaders it is important that they are not only capable of acting out their faith. Students need to develop leadership and organisational skills.

One of the key ways that YCS develops this is through being a student run Movement. Students take ownership and responsibility for the Movement and this allows them to develop the skills needed to lead an organisation (such as how to run meetings, take minutes, handle finances, etc) as well as those needed to play an active leadership role in their own community and among their peers (such as setting a positive example, being prepared to go against the trends, etc).

Any organisation or Movement that aims to develop the spirituality of humans, especially young people, needs to make sure that in doing so they don't discount or disempower their abilities as a person. To simply run something FOR young people can never have the full impact of developing committed and capable Christian leaders.

In the local group situation this means that the leaders of the group are students and that Adults involved are there to support and empower students, rather than to run the group or the Movement. This is why adults in YCS are known as Adult Assistants.



The Role of An Adult Assistant

YCS groups are led and run BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS. This is one of the key principles that separate YCS from other youth groups or Movements and it is essential to the method of Faith Formation that the Movement uses.

The role of the Adult Assistant is to support, empower and positively challenge the student leaders. There are basically two parts to this role:

Outside Meetings

The main work of an Adult Assistant is behind the scenes and therefore outside the group meeting. The Assistant is actually vital to the formation of leaders and members. They do this by:

- Meeting with the Key Leader/s before the group meeting in order to plan how they will run the meeting. This should be particularly focused on how they will lead the Review of Life and the Gospel Reflection.
- Follow up with the leader afterwards to review how the group meeting went and how they could improve things.
- Build friendship with the group leaders and members through activities outside the meeting.
- Keep Parents informed about what is happening with the group.

In The Meeting

The Assistant also has a role in the meeting, but it is more of a “backseat role.” They need to:

- Attend YCS Meetings.
- Ask questions that positively challenge students. You are inviting them to look deeper and take the next step.
- Supervise.
- Assist the leader when and where they need it.

Key Points

There are a few key points to remember:

- Adult Assistants should **never** make decisions for the group.
- They should **never** be referred to as a leader.



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- Assistants do have an **active role** to play, but it happens behind the scenes.
- **The students are the leaders and the experts.** This is difficult because it reverses the roles we normally play, but it is essential to the Movement.

We're all human and we're all learning. We don't expect you to be perfect at this role. We just ask that you do your best in the spirit of supporting the Students to develop as people, as leaders and as Christians.



Starting A YCS Group

This is a seven step process. It is fairly simple to do with the resources provided, but we are always extremely keen to help out with any difficulties or issues that might arise.

1. Get the support of the School or Parish.

It is important that you get this support first. It seems obvious but not everyone does it! Make sure that the person you are asking (ie Principal, APRE, Parish Priest) understands what YCS is. Also you should be asking for their support rather than just permission. This doesn't necessarily mean a massive commitment, but it is important that the YCS group be seen as a valued part of the school or parish community rather than an outside "add-on."

2. Find an adult who can be the Adult Assistant to the group.

In the school situation this could either be yourself as the campus minister or you could find another staff member who was interested in doing it. A ratio of 1 adult to every 8 students is a good way to work out if you need to have more than one Assistant.

3. Find a core group of students.

The Assistant then needs to find four students that they can invite to be the leaders of the group.

4. Plan the starting of the group.

The Assistant should meet with those 4 students who will be key leaders and plan the advertising of the group and the first meeting. Here are a few suggestions:

- This leaders group should meet at least twice before the first meeting of the program.
- Advertising of the group should be done as creatively as possible. This can include posters, newsletter notices, speaking on assembly, speaking at mass, flyers to be handed out in homeroom, etc.
- There is a template of a basic notice included here, but use that as a guide of what information to include.
- Advertise for around 2 weeks in a school and 4 weeks in a parish.



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- Be aware that while advertising is good for raising awareness, most students will only come if personally invited. Using the template invitations included, each of the 4 leaders should invite 3 others to the first meeting.
- It would also be good to get a list of about 15 names of people that teachers at the school think might be interested and give them invitations too.

5. Run the first meeting.

Each week it is the role of the Adult Assistant to meet with two of the students outside the group meeting in order to prepare the meeting. The meeting agenda and activities are all set out in the NUTS Program, so the preparation is just about making sure that the students understand the questions they are asking and the roles they are taking. It is also important to prepare the Gospel Review or Faith Reflection with them.

6. Continue running the NUTS Program for 8 Weeks

The assistant needs to continue meeting for preparation with the leaders before each weekly meeting. Two leaders should take on the running of the meetings for two weeks at a time. It is suggested that each week should include one of the original 4 leaders, plus one other student.

When running the meeting there are two roles. One student runs the Review of Life and the other runs the reflection and the administrative parts of the meeting. The idea is that they do this as a pair, and the second week they swap over so that both get a chance at both roles and they can learn from the mistakes made previously.

This means that eight students (four pairs) should get a turn at running the meeting.

7. After the program.

The National YCS can support you with the transition from using the NUTS Program into being an ongoing group. We are also currently working on a resource to help with this. So please feel free to contact me about this as that time approaches.