

Goal: What matters most in relational discipleship is that multiple trusted adults are equipped to accompany young people in life and faith.

Faith Formation Framework



Shared

Faith shared by adults.

Internalized

through spiritual practices and learning.

Applied Faith applied through



Catalyzed

Faith catalyzed by family intimacy and intentionality.

Prioritized

Faith *prioritized* by the entire faith community and leadership.



Introduction and Context

TENx10's Faith Formation Framework reminds us that **young people are most likely to have a faith that matters when:**

- 1. **Faith is Shared by Adults:** When multiple trusted adults model their own faith that matters.
- 2. Faith is Internalized Through Spiritual Practices and Learning: Young people own their faith when they engage in Christian practices and beliefs, including prayer, reading Scripture, learning the key truths Christians believe, sharing testimonies, and practicing sabbath.
- 3. **Faith is Applied Through Service and Justice:** Young people flourish when they serve and lead.

In practice, that model of relational discipleship is possible for all youth when:

- 4. Faith is Catalyzed by Family Intimacy and Intentionality.
- 5. Faith is Prioritized by the Entire Faith Community and Leadership in structure, culture, and decision-making.

This Field Guide focuses on the first of those drivers: **Faith Shared by Adults:** when multiple trusted adults model a faith that matters, both within and beyond a conventional youth ministry context.





Why Adult Mentorship is Important

Mentorship matters. It mattered to Jesus, and it matters to us.

And, it's good.

- It's good for teenagers.
- It's good for **mentors**.
- It's good for the whole community.

Some of the best and most recent research backs this up. In *Growing Young*, the Fuller Youth Institute shared that "much of American youth and young adult ministry tends to be devoted to building relationships with age-group peers. While peer friendships are crucial, a variety of analyses suggest that intergenerational relationships are also incredibly important... the good news

is that when we bridge generation gaps, everyone grows young. Crossgenerational discipleship is beneficial not only for young people but also for older generations who need the vitality of the young."¹

Sociologist Christian Smith writes that when it comes to strengthening the faith of young people, one of the most important factors is "the presence of non-family adults in religious congregations who know...[youth] well and can engage them in talk on serious topics, beyond superficial chit chat. The more such adults are present, the more a church, temple, synagogue, or mosque feels like a community or an extended family, which is itself a strong bonding force."²

1 Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad M. Griffin, Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016)

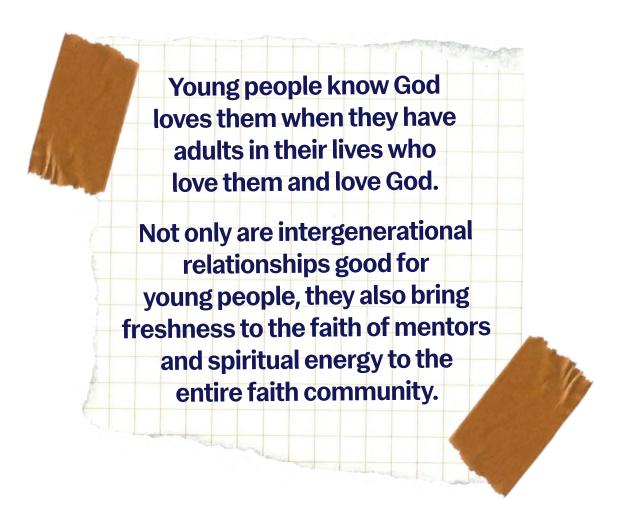
2 Christian Smith, "Keeping the Faith," First Things Magazine, May 2021



Most importantly, it's the model God gives us in Scripture. Relationship is key to God's plan for humankind from the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden. God doesn't want us to be alone (Genesis 2:18).

We also see that relationship is central to the early church in Acts, which shared everything—from teaching and prayers, to their very meals (Acts 2:42-47).

We see an example of mentoring in the Apostle Paul, who invited a younger Timothy to "follow me as I follow Christ" and charged him to influence others by entrusting what Paul had taught him to "faithful men who will be able to teach others also (1 Corinthians 11:1)." Paul mentored Timothy. Timothy mentored others. **Those others mentored others who mentored others who mentored...us.**





How Can Faith Communities and Youth Workers Make Mentorship Happen?

What we've talked about so far sounds awesome, right? We know teenagers need multiple caring adults invested in them because we want young people to have a faith that lasts a lifetime. The question is, how do we find the mentors our young people need and equip them well to partner with teenagers?

Let's start with four basic steps to identify, recruit, empower, and support the trusted, spiritually mature adults in your church or ministry to mentor young people:

- 1. Identify potential adult mentors
 - 2. Recruit adult mentors
- 3. Equip and coach adult mentors
 - 4. Check-in and coach

Are you ready? Let's get going.

Step 1: Identify Potential Adult Mentors

Let's start by drafting a list of potential adult mentors.

You may have just panicked at the idea of making this list. You're already thinking about how you can't come up with anyone, how all the good possible mentors don't have time, or a bunch of other reasons it's tough to make a list.

You may be making assumptions, like, "I think our young people would love Joan, but she's too busy." Or, "I think Mike could be good, but his workload seems heavy. And Dan has shift work, so surely he can't make a commitment." We too often disqualify potentially great mentors without giving them a chance. The truth is, you won't know if you don't ask.

Resist saying "no" for potential mentors before you even ask them.

Let's remember: we're not looking for youth ministry volunteers, we're looking for mentors. Just because someone doesn't have time to be at every youth group activity doesn't mean they can't accompany and mentor young people.



Build your list of possible mentors by looking for people in your faith community who...

- embody the fruits of the Spirit in their everyday life (Galatians 5:22-23), in things like their relationships and the ways they serve or volunteer already
- prioritize their own spiritual practices, including regular Bible study, prayer, and corporate worship
- · like being with other people, and
- · care about your faith community

Need a little more on this?

Check out the awesome bonus material at the end of this Field Guide to find "The hallmarks of a high potential adult mentor." You don't need to identify potential adult mentors on your own. Get other people involved by asking for recommendations from...

- caregivers or parents of teens
- your senior pastor or parish priest
- · other church leaders
- youth! (Ask them to write down the names of adults in the church they would want to spend more time with).

No matter whose advice you seek, be sure to describe the kind of adult you're thinking of ("seems to love Jesus, is kind to teenagers"). You'll likely be surprised by the people they suggest, including people who wouldn't have been on your radar.

Reflection Questions & Action Steps

Does the idea of identifying potential adult mentors for the young people you serve fill you with excitement or make you nervous? If the latter, reflect on what may be making you hesitate:

Share your reflections with a trusted mentor or peer and ask for their help with reframing or addressing your hesitations

What are three steps you can take this week to identify potential adult mentors (e.g., ask three parents of teens in your church or ministry, poll your young people)?

Share that list of actions with a mentor or peer and ask for their help in making sure you take those steps.

What five adults in your church or ministry come to mind as highpotential adult mentors? (You get bonus points if you name more than five!)



Way to build your list! Now that you've built a "dream team" list of potential mentors, you're in a great place to begin recruiting.

To recruit adult mentors, you'll need to do three things:

- 1. Pray
- 2. Meet with potential mentors
- 3. Provide them with multiple ways they could mentor

1. Pray.

We never want to underestimate the power of prayer and the Holy Spirit's leading in engaging adults to mentor young people. Ask God for guidance, courage, wisdom, and discernment as you begin recruiting.

2. Meet with potential mentors.

We know. This may be the most daunting part! But yes, you actually have to reach out to potential mentors and ask to meet with them. You can do it!

Here are some ways you could do this:

- · Email or text them and ask to meet after your next worship service.
- · Give them a call and invite them to coffee.
- · Hop on a brief video call.
- Ask the person who recommended them to introduce you to them in person, via email, or text. Then follow up directly and ask to chat.
- Introduce yourself to them after a worship service and ask if you could schedule a conversation with them.



3. Provide them with multiple ways they could mentor.

Before you meet with them, let's talk about HOW they can mentor. Having a good plan is half the battle, so let's get you set up for success. We want you to build a list of specific, actionable ways the adults in your faith community can mentor youth. Better yet, work with a few trusted adults already involved with mentoring and build the list together.

There are so many ways trusted adults can journey with young people as they follow Jesus. They could opt into anything from a formal role in youth ministry, to inviting teenagers to serve alongside them, to more organic, everyday mentorship opportunities. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Informal ideas you can suggest to potential mentors....

- Invite youth who are interested in your occupation to shadow you at work for a few hours or even a full day.
- Do you volunteer in the community? Perhaps at a soup kitchen, or in neighborhood clean-up events? Invite youth to join you in your community volunteer activities.
- Invite a young person to join you in serving your church, parish, or ministry. Do you regularly help with Sunday morning set-up or greeting? Sing in the choir? Or volunteer with children's church? Have them come with you!
- Invite youth to participate in day-to-day activities you can both enjoy—you never knew grocery shopping or dog walking could be so fun!
- Invite youth to join you for hobbies you both enjoy: pick-up basketball, pickleball, crafting, gardening, etc.
- Looking for an excuse to try a new food, book, or activity? Invite a young person to try it with you.

More formal ideas ...

- Sign up to lead or host a youth Bible study.
- Open up your home to host a youth ministry meeting or party.
- Join your youth on a ministry outing or mission trip.
- Become a regular member of the youth ministry team.

The most important thing is to have a list of ideas prepared in advance of meeting with potential mentors. And of course, as you get to know the new volunteer, invite them to brainstorm their own ideas.

Need a few more simple mentoring ideas?

We've got you! Check out the <u>Simple Mentoring Handbook</u> filled with great ideas for how trusted, Christ-following adults can weave mentoring into their already busy lives.

Reflection Questions & Action Steps

1. What organic mentorship opportunities might your young people gravitate to most? Write down a few starter ideas for adult mentors (e.g., volunteering together, shadowing you at work, trying a new food together).

Share the ideas, along with more formal youth group needs, with potential adult mentors

- 2. Who are the first three high-potential mentors you will reach out to and invite to mentor youth? Take a few minutes now to email, text, or call each one to set up a conversation.
- 3. Take a few minutes to develop a simple "mentor recruiting system" that would work for you, too. For example, (a) pray for guidance each week about who to recruit; (b) review and update your list of potential mentors; (c) follow up with at least one person you've already spoken with; (d) reach out to at least one person on your list.

Share that list of actions with a mentor or peer and ask for their help in making sure you take those steps.



Potential mentors are starting to say yes. Well done! Now, let's set them up for safety and success. We want them to feel prepared and equipped to start this journey of relational discipleship radically focused on Jesus.

Before we go any further, we need to create guardrails of protection and safety. We live in a world where far too many adults have committed egregious harm against young people. Young people need us to be safe adults who keep them safe, and that includes practicing care when it comes to when, where, and how we, and other adults, spend time with minors. Please remember this as you apply the ideas here. Assume we are prefacing every suggestion with, "Keeping safety in mind and following your ministry's protocols..."

For more tips, read the important section, Keeping All Generations Safe and Protected at the end of this chapter.

Now, let's get started. Training on the 3 Mentoring Keys

As one adult mentor at a TENx10 partner church recently shared, "My weekly time with the middle schooler I mentor is my most stressful meeting of the week!" While we empathize with that feeling, it doesn't have to be that way. You can love and serve your adult mentors by helping them practice TENx10's 3 Mentoring Keys:

Key #1: Questions Over Answers

One of the biggest and best questionaskers of all time was Jesus, who asked over 300 questions throughout the gospels. As Dan White, Jr., describes, "It should unsettle us a bit that God, who knows everything, uses questions as his main mode of being with others." White goes on to say that "Jesus uses curiosity to coax the heart out of

hiding."3 Jesus modeled mentorship that tries to understand what the other is seeking and allows room for doubt (just look at the father asking for a miracle in Mark 9:14-29, who tells Jesus, "I believe; help my unbelief!"). And this approach also mirrors what we see is most effective in mentorship when we look at the research. Young people are more likely to have a faith that matters when they have space to ask questions and express doubts than when they are presented with biblical truth as an authority never to be examined. When we practice mentorship with young people, it's most effective to imitate Jesus and prioritize questions over answers.

3 Dan White Jr., Love over Fear: Facing Monsters, Befriending Enemies, and Healing Our Polarized World.

Remember that a new conversation with a teenager will go better if the mentor starts small. All parts of conversations don't need to be explicitly about Jesus or faith, especially when you're just starting to get to know each other. Here are a few starter questions adult mentors could ask young people:

- What was the highlight of your week?
- What was the lowlight of your week?
- What is one small thing that made you laugh/frustrated you/ stressed you out/surprised you this week?
- Where did you see God in your week?

As youth share, mentors can lean in by simply saying, **"Tell me more."** Look for good times to share your answers to these questions, too. This is a conversation, not an interview.

Sometimes, youth will share things that seem trivial, or they may seem overly dramatic or worried about something you know isn't especially consequential. While we always want to steer teens toward deeper truths and God's wisdom, it's important to be present with them in whatever they share. Connecting over little things builds the trust that makes them comfortable to share the bigger stuff, too.

As youth share about their lives, mentors can go deeper in pointing them toward Jesus by asking things like:

- What do you think God thinks about that?
- Where did you notice God in the midst of what you were describing?
- What do you think God would want to do about that?

When it comes right down to it, a mentor's core responsibility is to point young people to Jesus. The job of the mentor isn't to have answers for every question, or necessarily to reinforce "good behaviors and wise choices," but to point teenagers toward a life radically focused on Jesus.

Key #2: Authenticity over perfection.

Young people do not want perfect mentors (which is good, because otherwise we'd all be disqualified). They do want authentic mentors. Authenticity and vulnerability, when practiced *appropriately*, are superpowers for building trust with young people.

Are your adult mentors struggling with how to follow Christ in a critical career decision? Are they wondering how to trust Christ with a financial need? They can share struggles like these with the young people they mentor. They can also share genuine stories about where they have seen God at work and where they are trying to understand what God is up to. What's the most significant answer to prayer they've seen in the last month? What's something they've been praying for this last year that God hasn't answered quite as they had hoped? When have they been disappointed with God? How has God been abundantly faithful in the midst of their challenges?

Talking through topics like these offers amazing opportunities to practice **appropriate vulnerability** with young people. This is where "follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1) gets real.

Note that "appropriate vulnerability," as mentioned above, is vital. There are struggles adult mentors should only share with other trusted adults, and not with young people. Specific challenges they are having with their own children, road bumps in their marriage, or past missteps might not be appropriate to share with a young person. Hopefully, mentors already have their peers and mentors in your faith community who can walk with them in their own discipleship journey. If not, you may want to encourage them to find a small group or mentor who can support them as they walk with Jesus and mentor young people in your ministry.

When we train mentors that they don't have to be perfect, it helps teenagers to believe that they don't have to be perfect to be loved by God or others. Sharing our imperfections allows young people to see that each one of us is loved unconditionally.

We all hunger to know that there are people who love us no matter what, just like God does. Mentors can help show unconditional love to young people through their authentic care and consistency. Loving teens unconditionally doesn't mean condoning unwise choices or having low expectations. It does, however, mean that our love for teenagers isn't based on or withheld because of any behavior, action, or belief.

Key #3: Little acts over grand gestures.

New mentors often think they have to do something grand to connect with young people, like a day-long hike or a trip to an expensive amusement park. In reality, young people are looking to connect with adults whose ongoing, regular acts demonstrate that they're seen and valued. Small, thoughtful, and consistent acts combine to create a major impact: a weekly text message to check in and let them know you're praying for them; finding them after the church service to ask about a big test or athletic try-out; showing up to watch them in the school play or track meet; stopping by to drop off a favorite treat on the day they start a new job.

Small acts of consideration, when repeated over time, build trust and make teenagers feel known.

Reflection Questions & Action Steps

- 1. What are a few common questions or fears your adult mentors are likely to have about relating to young people?
- 2. What are three ways you can address their questions and fears, so they feel prepared to connect with the youth in your church, parish, or ministry?
- 3. In your own mentoring with young people, do you feel pressure to have all the answers, be perfect, or emphasize grand gestures? When do you feel those pressures?
- 4. When you feel those pressures, what can you do to remind yourself to lead with questions, value authenticity, and rely on little acts? (This will help you do the same for others!)

Share these reflections with a mentor or peer and ask for their input and help.



You've already put on your "coach" hat as you've equipped your mentors. In this last step, you're going to keep wearing it. Healthy, intentional mentoring takes more than an initial conversation or two. It takes checking in, listening, coaching, adapting—and then doing it all again and again.

Coaching and checking in don't have to be complex. Additional steps you can take to help equip adult mentors include:

- Sharing a few key handout resources with them at the beginning of their mentoring journey. That might include an overview of your church or ministry's discipleship process, or "top ten tips for relating to youth," etc. TENx10's NextGen Simple Mentoring Toolkit has a suite of resources to help equip new mentors. Don't just pass these off, but take the time to walk through key points and answer their questions.
- Facilitating regular in-person training sessions for adult mentors (e.g., every quarter or half-year) focused on youth mentorship basics. These in-person training sessions should also provide plenty of time for panel discussions and peer-to-peer breakouts with other adult mentors to compare notes and demystify mentorship basics. The Simple Mentoring small group video series, produced by TENx10 in partnership with RightNow Media and Barna, could be a great resource for a series of training sessions.

- Meeting or calling mentors regularly (e.g., monthly or bimonthly) to thank them for mentoring youth; hear about their latest experiences; identify any acute needs their young people might have; and brainstorm how they can continue to connect effectively going forward.
- **Pray regularly for adult mentors.** Ok, this one is not extra! You should be doing this from the start. Pray for mentors when you pray for the youth in your church or ministry. Ask for their prayer requests and let them know you're praying for them. And most importantly, actually pray for them!
- Don't forget to check in with each young person as well. Who are the trusted adults in their lives and when did they last spend time with them? How is the relationship with their mentor progressing? Do they feel supported and cared for? Do they feel safe asking questions? Are they learning more about how to follow Christ in their life?
- Celebrate what God is doing. Keep track of what is working. Is there a mentor who has grown significantly in their ability to relate to youth? Is there a young person who has taken a leap in learning how to follow Christ? Find opportunities to celebrate those successes. When practices that could help other mentors emerge, pass those along to the others via email or in your next training session.



Going above and beyond: Some additional tips for equipping and coaching adult mentors

Wanting to help young people have a relationship with Jesus can be a great motivation for adult mentors to go deeper in their own faith formation.

Over time, make a practice of building your own resource list of good spiritual formation tools for adults and the young people they care about.

Examples could include:

TENx10's Faith Foundations series.
 Faith Foundations is a series of
 videos and discussion guides
 created to ignite theological
 dialogue between young people
 and the adults in their lives about
 the foundations of the faith.

- Axis' <u>A Parent's Guide to the</u>
 <u>Bible</u> is a great resource for
 any adult who wants to help
 young people better encounter
 God's word. Included in Axis'
 guide are specific, practical
 recommendations for how adults
 and young people alike can read,
 understand, and apply scripture.
- The classic SOAP method for basic bible study, starting with
 - Reading a Scripture passage
 - Observing the key themes and messages
 - Discussing ways to apply the passage to daily life
 - Closing with Prayer, drawing from what God revealed in your study.
- There are many other great examples, including <u>Alpha's</u> <u>video series</u> and classics like C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. The point is to build your own list of theological and spiritual formation resources over time that you can share with caregivers as their own questions arise.

Reflection Questions & Action Steps

1. What are your thoughts and feelings as you think of ongoing coaching for mentors? Does it sound scary or exciting? What do you think makes it feel that way?

2. What could you do to help you and your mentors see checking in and coaching as a gift for everyone?

3. What basic system can you put in place to capture meaningful stories, track mentorship, and help make sure young people (or mentors!) don't fall through the cracks?

4. What step will you take this week, or this month, to start keeping a pulse on mentorship for your youth?



Getting Started

Wondering what this might look like in a handful of years?

Here's what one community has seen.

The senior pastor of a church committed to this type of mentoring shared that, as teenagers enter sixth grade, ministry leaders work with parents, caregivers, and students to identify five adults who will commit to accompany them through middle and high school as mentors and prayer partners. Recently, as the first group of former sixth-graders finished twelfth grade, each graduate stood in front of the congregation during Sunday worship along with their team of five adults. With great emotion, these adults prayed for the young people they had been cheering on for seven years. This church has found that the blessing of mentoring doesn't just inspire the graduates; it changes everyone.4

We know it's work. We want you to know it's worth it.

Whether you're just starting the

4 Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad M. Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016)

mentoring model in your faith community or you're bolstering something that already exists, we want to say thank you. What you're doing matters. The awkward conversations, the intentional next steps, the search for amazing adults to love young people, enduring the no's to get to the right yesses, the follow-up and follow-through... we know it takes really significant effort. On behalf of a generation who needs this, we say, "Thank you."

Take your time and work the steps. Go through them again and again if it helps.

Remember to pray. A lot. Prayer is the thing that can change everything.

And remember, Jesus did this, too, and it wasn't always easy for him! Not everything went well. But creating a ministry based on relationships and mentoring was still what Jesus did.

We are praying for you. Here's to giving young people adults who love them and love Jesus. Here's to shifting back to relational discipleship. Here's to living a life radically focused on Jesus.



Keeping All Generations Safe and Protected

As your faith community pursues relational discipleship, you will be encouraging adults to spend time with teenagers who are minors. We believe these relationships are vital for faith formation and discipleship; like you, we want to ensure they are safe and healthy for everyone.

We urge you to consult with your supervisor, board, and/or legal counsel to develop and implement practices and procedures that keep everyone protected and comply with laws and regulations. While your policies should ultimately be determined by you and other wise leaders in your setting, some common practices that help promote both safety and healthy relational boundaries for mentoring relationships include:

- 1. **Interaction Guidelines:** Establish and communicate clear policies for interaction with minors, including one-on-one meetings, physical contact, texting and digital communication, and overall appropriate behavior.
- 2. **Parental Involvement:** Keep parents and caregivers informed and involved in their teenagers' activities, obtaining written consent when appropriate.
- 3. **Safety Guidelines:** Establish and uphold safety policies for all work with minors, such as when and how to do background checks, as well as your plan for ongoing supervision and training.

If you have further questions, consider seeking the input of outside organizations that specialize in developing policies that keep young people safe. If your church network or denomination doesn't recommend particular agencies, search online or ask other faith or community leaders whom they recommend (a few possibilities include MinistrySafe and VIRTUS, which is geared toward Catholic parishes and organizations).

Thank you for doing what you can to protect all involved!

Tool: The Hallmarks of a High Potential Adult Mentor

Do you need to recruit additional adult mentors so each young person in your church or parish sees an authentic faith modeled by multiple trusted adults? Unsure what to look for in a high potential adult mentor? This list includes a few hallmarks for someone who has the potential to be an effective mentor. Mentors do not necessarily need to meet each of these marks. But, hopefully, this is a helpful starting point to help you identify high potential mentors.

Someone who has the potential to be an effective mentor to the young people in your church or parish will embody the following hallmarks. An adult who is:

 Known within your church or parish community for embodying the fruits of the Spirit in their everyday life (e.g., love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) (Galatians 5:22-23).

- Known to prioritize their own spiritual practices such as regular Bible study, prayer, and corporate worship.
- Already regularly volunteers, or has volunteered in the past, in your church or parish. They have a demonstrated commitment to following Christ in the context of commitment to your worshiping community
- Known for kindness and has the capacity to practice empathy. As defined by Stanford University's "d.school" (Design School), empathizing is "the work you do to understand people... It is your effort to understand the way they do things and why, their physical and emotional needs, how they think about the world, and what is meaningful to them." In other words, it's sitting on the curb of a young person's life, celebrating their dreams and grieving over their despair.

Tool: The Hallmarks of a High Potential Adult Mentor

- Known for listening, asking good questions and leading with curiosity. An effective mentor will help a young person explore the person and work of Christ as it applies to all aspects of their lives via thoughtful questions that invite reflection. Even better, an effective mentor will help a young person feel safe about bringing their own hard questions into the conversation.
- Already known for pointing people to Jesus in the ebb and flow of their everyday life. The job of the mentor isn't to have answers for every question, or necessarily to reinforce "good behaviors and wise choices", but to point youth towards a life radically focused on Jesus.
- Represent the diversity within your church or parish. If everyone on your high potential mentor list is similar in age, ethnicity, or interests, you probably need to expand your list.
- Available and willing. The ministry of presence is one of the most important ministries for a reason.

Are they willing and available to mentor a young person in your community?

Who comes quickly to mind when you read these hallmarks? Are there a few people who embody those habits and practices? If your list still doesn't feel long enough, ask a few parents, current volunteers, or young people who they would recommend. You could also ask your own mentor(s), members of your community, or bible study group etc., if you are part of one.

As a reminder, when you invite trusted and spiritually mature adults in your congregation to step into mentorship, make sure to work with your church, parish and/or denomination leadership to understand and follow the necessary requirements and guidelines for ensuring youth safety.

Thank you for asking additional trusted, spiritually mature adults in your church or parish to answer the mentorship call.