

LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM

Introduction

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The Lighthouse Program

INTRODUCTION

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1. INTRODUCING THE *LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM*

The *Lighthouse Program* is a religious faith development program undertaken voluntarily by Confirmed high school students—“Lighthouse leaders”—and younger candidates who will be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation (ages 10+). Comprised of leadership training and a peer ministry component, the program invites older students to become actively involved in leading catechesis for Confirmation, as part of a larger preparation process.

This program includes **eight to ten** sessions of Christian leadership training for high school students, followed by **five** peer ministry sessions with Confirmation candidates led by the newly trained Lighthouse leaders.

In all, the program recommends **fifteen** sessions. Those involved include high school students, Confirmation candidates, catechists/teachers, parents, and pastors.

The *Lighthouse Program*: A Rationale

The word “evangelization” comes from the Greek “to preach the Good News.” Evangelization and mission are at the very heart of the Gospel and of Church teaching. Using the themes of evangelization and mission of the Church, Pope Francis’s first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG, 2013), expresses the joy of sharing the Gospel with all. He acknowledges the “rise and growth of associations and movements mostly made up of young people” (EG, 105) as the work of the Holy Spirit, who values their searching for a “more real sense of belonging” (EG, 105). He recognizes the “need for young people to exercise greater leadership,” and celebrates the concept of young people “bringing Jesus to every street...” (EG, 105). The *Lighthouse Program* issues an invitation to those who wish to seek and to develop their faith by sharing it with others, and, in so doing, to open themselves, by the grace of God, to strengthening it.

A basic tenet of learning theory is that people learn by doing; therefore, it is important that student leaders not only learn about leadership but also perform leadership tasks. For a faith development program to achieve its aim, the participants must lead in religious faith. This means that the high school students spend time exploring and articulating their own understanding and experience of faith. They, in turn, lead the candidates in articulating their own faith *from* a position of faith.



Lighthouses bring sea vessels home, whether the boats are navigating their journey piece by piece or are far out at sea, wondering how to return to shore. A lighthouse lights the surrounding land and sea, offering safety and peace. It stands tall, solid, and strong in its space, sure of its foundation and reach. This program—primarily through the peer leaders—can offer similar qualities to the Confirmation process, lighting the way and providing confidence, vision, and loving support.

Faith Development as a Free Act

Faith development, at any stage in a person's life, is only in response to that person's faith inquiry, made as a free act. Authentic faith development occurs when an individual becomes aware of the awakening of God's grace within them, rather than being an imposition from without. The *Lighthouse Program* offers an opportunity for high school students to engage in faith development in a real and authentic way.

High School Student Participation

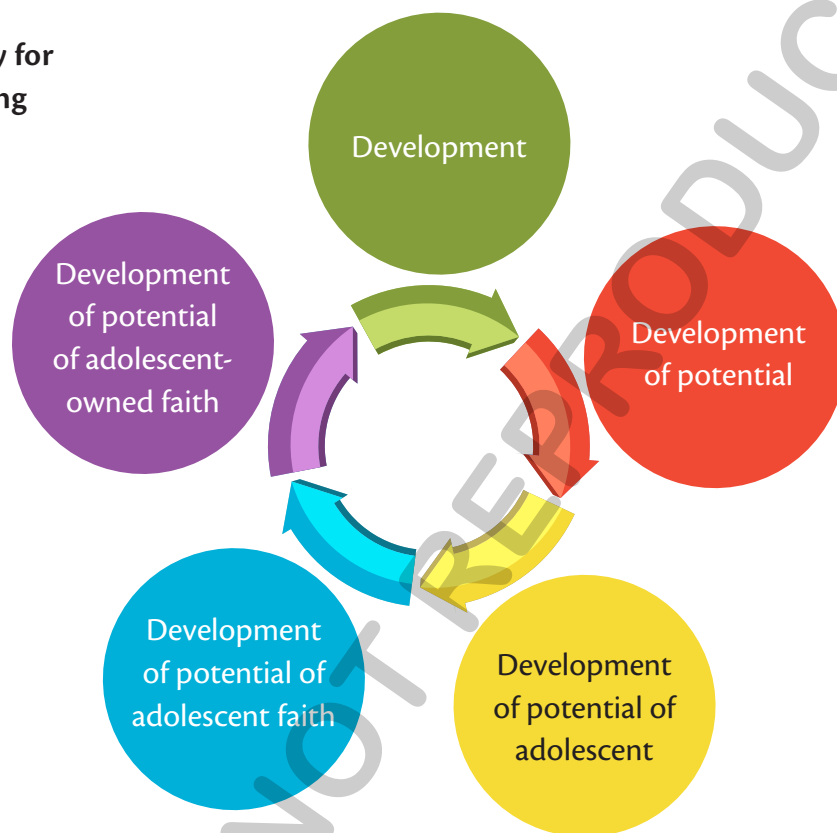
The *Lighthouse Program* is open to students of all levels of religious faith. The high school participants who opt into the program are beginning a life stage that demands much of them in terms of personal development in their school and/or home lives. Their decision to opt in is made as a personal response to an invitation issued by their faith formation director, pastor, and parish community.

If logistics allow, the invitation to join the program can be open to all confirmed high school students. The program may also be offered to a specific group. A small number of students who register and become participants of the program (a) will have not made a specific religious faith commitment, (b) are of a non-religious faith perspective, and/or (c) are questioning religious faith. All groups equally challenge and channel the program with a different worldview and therefore add a "critical friend" dimension to the entire process.

Figure 1 depicts an aspirational pathway for the program. During the leadership training, the facilitator allows the Lighthouse leaders to explore possibilities and opportunities for their own faith development in keeping with an authentic and relevant faith development.



FIGURE 1: A pathway for the leadership training program



Confirmation Candidate Participation

A key focus for the *Lighthouse Program* is the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. You will give the candidates an opportunity to engage with high schoolers in conversations about faith, belief, doubt, and their upcoming celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through the Spirit, this dialogue moves and grows each week, empowering a searching embrace of the Sacrament for the candidates.

It is heartening to see the candidates seek out their Lighthouse leader on the day of Confirmation for a photo or a chat. The dialogue that builds up over the sessions is quickly woven into a rich tapestry displaying the faith development of both Lighthouse leaders and Confirmation candidates, and may offer them the courage to identify as people of faith or, at the very least, continue their faith journey, as opposed to accepting Confirmation as the Sacrament of exit from the Church, as it has often been described.



2. SETTING UP THE *LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM*

The *Lighthouse Program* consists of eight to ten training sessions with Lighthouse leaders, followed by five peer ministry sessions with Confirmation candidates (four before Confirmation and one after).

The high school Lighthouse leaders follow the *Leadership Sessions* handbook for their training. The leadership sessions can be completed in as few as eight sessions, but ten sessions are more reasonable, i.e., four weeks to cover Sessions 1 and 2 (which have been split into four parts to accommodate this), four to cover Sessions 3–6, and two weeks to cover Sessions 7 and 8. (See Figure 2 for the list of these sessions, and sample calendars on pages 10-11.) If more time is available within the timeline, the concepts raised in each session can be expanded and explored further.

The last two sessions (7 and 8) review the *Peer Ministry Sessions* and *Prayer Services* handbooks, which the Confirmation candidates will use in their work with the newly trained Lighthouse leaders. In these review sessions with the high school leaders, the program facilitator takes time to explore each of the five peer ministry sessions with the Lighthouse leaders. From this point, the Lighthouse leaders are encouraged to step into their leadership roles. This means that each leader, alone and with their partner (as the leaders will be working in pairs), spends time exploring, working through, and preparing to lead the five peer ministry sessions. As a group, the Lighthouse leaders will decide on the logistics of running the peer ministry sessions (for example, who will light the candle/lead the opening blessing/lead the singing during the five sessions). By placing this trust in their ability to make decisions around logistics and content, the program facilitator displays confidence in the high school leaders' capacity for leadership.

Organizing Participation

Step 1: The first point of contact is with your Confirmation catechists. These individuals will assist you in setting up and running both elements of this program, and their support is vital. From a practical point of view, they may also be available to run some of the leadership or peer ministry sessions. (For example, a prayer service takes place at the start of each of the five peer ministry sessions, and you as main leader/facilitator might like to lead all five sessions, or you might prefer the support of your co-leaders to divide up the work of leading the services.)

- Decide which high school year(s) would work best at your school (e.g., junior and senior years). Any year can work, but you will need to balance against other competing programs and activities to make sure Lighthouse won't get lost in the shuffle.



FIGURE 2: Overview of leadership training sessions





- Outline a preliminary calendar for the program. Four of the five peer ministry sessions (led by the high school students) occur before the sacrament. The fifth session happens after the sacrament. If you plan ten sessions for the leadership training (with sessions 1 and 2 spread out over four sessions), you will need 14 total sessions before the date of Confirmation, plus one session after the sacrament. See sample calendars on pages 10-11.

Step 2: Promote the leadership training to your high school students. Include bulletin announcements, pulpit announcements, and **personal invitations**. Explain the program as a faith and leadership development program where students will have the opportunity to lead and practice their skills of leadership and reflective practice as well as explore their own faith. **Make it very clear that students in any phase of their faith journey are welcome to participate.** Include steps on how to register and communicate the deadline.

Step 3: With a partner (staff, pastor, or volunteer), explore the options for those who have registered. Celebrate your high school students' involvement by listing them in the bulletin or another parish publication. Note that all those who put themselves forward as program leaders each have something valuable to offer the program and may be considered suitable to take up leadership roles by virtue of their willingness to volunteer.

Step 4: Once you have completed registrations for both the high school student leaders and Confirmation candidates, place an order for materials. All facilitators require a set of—or access to—the program's handbooks to have a complete overview of the program.

- Each high school Lighthouse leader requires a *Leadership Sessions* handbook, a *Peer Ministry Sessions* handbook, and a *Prayer Services* handbook (or share one).
- All Confirmation candidates require a *Peer Ministry Sessions* handbook and a *Prayer Services* handbook (or share one).

When deciding to take on this program (on your own or with a partner), be prepared for many Spirit-filled moments for you and the participants to embrace. When we authentically and respectfully share our faith with another, as vulnerable and flawed as that faith can be, the Spirit moves in that place.



Using the Program in a School Setting

The Lighthouse Program will look somewhat different when used by a school. Here are some suggestions:

- You will need to find one or more partner schools or parishes. Assign at least three Confirmation candidates to every pair of high school leaders.
- Carefully review all calendars and holidays when making the schedule.
- Decide where each session will take place and arrange transportation if needed.
- Communicate with all stakeholders regarding all aspects of the program, including the schedule and students involved. This will include:
 - › **teachers**
 - › **administration**
 - › **parents**
- The registration process should include getting permission and signatures from teachers and parents to miss any class sessions. Applicants should also sign to acknowledge their responsibility to follow up with teachers regarding any missed material.

Meeting Times

If space allows, scheduling during the same time that the youth are used to meeting is ideal for continuity and simplicity. If your space will not accommodate this, consider offering sessions on the same day of the week, before or after your regular programming. For example, if your youth are used to meeting from 6-7:15 p.m. on Wednesday evenings, schedule Lighthouse sessions from 7:30-9:00 p.m.

If that type of scheduling will not work with your facilities, consider the young people's availability around other commitments as much as possible. Perhaps late afternoon on Sundays will work best for the youth, or possibly a different evening during the week.



Calendar Scheduling

A variety of factors will impact the dates of your Lighthouse sessions.

- The date that Confirmation will be celebrated will affect your overall schedule. Four of the Peer Ministry Sessions take place before Confirmation, and one takes place after.
- The Leadership Sessions to train the high school peer ministers must all precede the Peer Ministry Sessions.
- Carefully review parish and/or school calendars, including holidays, to avoid conflicts.
- Communicate the calendar well in advance so the young people and their families can plan accordingly.

We have provided two sample calendars. The first is designed for a parish whose celebration of Confirmation happens during the Easter season. It assumes a liturgical year in which Ash Wednesday falls on February 10, Spring Break is the week of March 15, and Easter Sunday falls on March 28. Sessions are all held on Wednesday evenings.

Date	Session	Content
Jan 6	Leadership Training 1 (a)	Bright Sparks – Introduction
Jan 13	1 (b)	Bright Sparks – Called by Name
Jan 20	2 (a)	Bright Sparks – Reflective Practice [1]
Jan 27	2 (b)	Bright Sparks – Reflective Practice [2]
Feb 3	3	Fanning the Flame – Leadership
Feb 17	4	Fanning the Flame – Mentoring
Feb 24	5	Hearts Ablaze – Vision and Values
Mar 3	6	Hearts Ablaze – E-Leadership
Mar 10	7	Unforgettable Fire – Confirmation and Peer Ministry [1]
Mar 31	8	Unforgettable Fire – Confirmation and Peer Ministry [2]
Apr 7	Peer Ministry 1	Setting the Pace
Apr 14	2	Picking Up Speed
Apr 21	3	Refueling
Apr 28	4	Gaining Ground
May 2	Confirmation Day	
May 5	5	Handing on the Baton