

# A Twelve Month Guide for Congregations That Care for Students

**A GIFT FROM  
LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY!**

To all who care for students,

Thank you for your interest in connecting with college & university students! This guide is designed to help get you started on an intentional ministry of keeping in touch with the students in your congregation. If you are located near an academic community and want even more ideas and resources for reaching out to those in higher education, talk to a Lutheran Campus Minister near you or visit the ELCA campus ministry website.

Connecting with college and university students is a challenging ministry. You won't always see the fruits of your labors immediately. You might even be tempted to give up. Keep going! As you get to know your students and watch their lives unfold, you'll find many good reasons to remind yourself, "well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Use the ideas in this guide or develop your own plan for ministry. God, the church, your students, and the world will benefit from your time, care, and attention.

May God's Spirit bless your efforts!

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“...thank you and everyone at Lutheran Campus Ministry for keeping in touch with me. Hearing from you helps me to remember who I am and what I believe...”

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The "12 Month Guide" was created by Deaconess Donna King & the Rev. James Norlie, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Oregon State University.

**LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY**  
[www.elca.org/campusministry](http://www.elca.org/campusministry)

**Supporting those in academic settings to find and fulfill their vocation in Jesus Christ.**

## Let's Help Each Other!

**Lutheran Campus Ministers can:** help connect your students to regional & national Lutheran student organizations, service projects, jobs, retreats • lead a workshop to help you better connect with students in your area • help train volunteers as faith-mentors for students • offer a Sunday morning class on current issues in ministry in higher education • network Christian faculty • etc., just ask!

**Consider establishing a scholarship fund** to support students from your congregation. Encourage them to reflect on the interconnections between the Christian faith, their academic discipline, and the world's needs. The world needs Christian scholars.

**Develop a service of sending/ blessing** for those who leave you. Find a way to recognize completion of degree programs, acceptance into a graduate programs, first jobs, etc. College is a sometimes lonely, sometimes exciting, often tumultuous experience...it can make all the difference to know that the Christian community remembers & cares about you.

**Keep praying publicly and often** for students, faculty, staff, administrators, campus ministers, volunteers, and all who serve in settings of higher education.

**Use your imagination, share your ideas...** Campus ministry happens in partnership with you!



## 3 March

**+ ASK THE PASTOR OR ANOTHER MINISTER TO SEND A PERSONAL LETTER OR NOTE TO ALL THE COLLEGE STUDENTS.** (Be sure to check this out well in advance.) Suggest including a copy of the bulletins or worship outlines your congregation is using for Lenten services. **+ ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS IN YOUR CONGREGATION TO DEVELOP SUMMER JOBS WITHIN THEIR BUSINESSES.**

## 4 April

**+ REMIND STUDENTS OF THE SUMMER JOB POSSIBILITIES AT CAMPS, CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES & BUSINESSES OWNED BY CONGREGATION MEMBERS.** Let those who are graduating know about the year long service opportunities available through various Christian volunteer corps. (Hint: call Lutheran Campus Ministers for ideas.)

## 5 May

**+ PLAN TO REINTEGRATE STUDENTS INTO THE LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS.** Students might work with youth groups, help with maintenance projects, make shut-in visits, organize servant events, teach Vacation Bible School or Sunday School, help with outreach, play softball, read lessons, assist with worship leadership, etc., etc. Welcome them back, train them for servant leadership, and let them know you need and want them in your midst! **+ DO YOU HAVE ANY GRADUATES THIS YEAR?** Ask gently about dreams for the future...not everyone knows what their next step is. Some are excited, some terrified. Graduation is most often held in May or June, depending on the school's academic calendar.

## 6 June

**+ RECOGNIZE GRADUATES** in a service or at a congregational dinner. Ask someone to talk about vocation, the life of Christian service. Are these new grads going on to school, getting a job, going on active duty, staying in your community, moving away? If they are leaving find a way to send them with your blessing. **+ KEEP WORKING HARD AT INTEGRATING RETURNING STUDENTS INTO CONGREGATIONAL LIFE.** If graduates are planning a move, suggest the names and locations of congregations which will be near to them. **+ CONTINUE TO GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS.** What might their experience add to your congregational life? What new insights and experiences do they bring? Perhaps the adult or high school Bible class would enjoy hearing the students insights. Is faith different for them since they've been to college? What should the church be listening to?

**Remember to CELEBRATE YOUR MINISTRY!**

(Now you get to start again!)

## This Will Get You Started!

**1. Organize a small team** to be responsible for student ministry.

**2. Prepare your list of students:** Include those 'away' at residential schools and those studying near home or via web-based classes.

**3. Let campus ministries and partner congregations know about your students away from home** by using the ELCA's campus ministry web site ([www.elca.org/campusministry](http://www.elca.org/campusministry)). Be sure to include as much information as is humanly possible: student name, campus, home phone, and congregation are essential. Encourage students to visit the campus ministry or congregation where they'll be a student and check it out!

**4. Get to know your students.** Be sensitive to student life. Student years can be full of stress, change, and exciting discoveries. Major life decisions are often made during the college years. Be supportive. Good education expands a person's world view along with their base of knowledge and reasoning. With nurture, a stronger, more encompassing faith can emerge. Be someone to talk to. Ups, downs, loneliness, friendships, fears, joys, impatience, deep desires, new understanding & misunderstandings ... all these are part of life in higher education. It helps to have a friend. Be empowering. Challenge your students—call them to a life of faith in mission to the whole cosmos!

**5. Be amazed!** Students may not always attend programs or express appreciation. "Success" may be hard to measure. But watch & see. Over the years God will work wonders through your ministry of care!

# Twelve Months of Ideas...

Start anywhere

...the secret is to keep going. Over time you will be amazed at the difference this makes!

## 7 July

**+ BEGIN COLLECTING STUDENTS' NAMES & SCHOOLS.**

Ask the campus ministries or partner congregations near these schools to send you newsletters, bulletins or other PR so that you can personally encourage your students to get involved when they move. **+ PLAN A GATHERING JUST FOR STUDENTS.** It could be a pizza night or a picnic, or a weekend retreat. Be sure to include those who will be new to college life in the fall. Find out what the year has been like for those in school and what words of wisdom they have to pass on to those who will be attending in the fall.

## 8 August

**+ BE ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO THE HOPES & FEARS OF THOSE LEAVING HOME FOR THE FIRST TIME.** Classes begin anywhere from mid August to late September. Send those who leave away with your blessing & pray for all ministries in higher education. **+ CONTINUE GATHERING AND SENDING NAMES.**

## 9 September

**+ ASK YOUR PASTOR TO INCLUDE PRAYERS DURING WORSHIP FOR ALL WHO STUDY AND ALL WHO TEACH.** **+ ADD STUDENTS TO YOUR CONGREGATION'S MAILING LIST** so they'll continue to receive newsletters. List all the students & their campuses in the newsletter and invite the congregation to pray for them. **+ SEND ANY ADDITIONAL NAMES OR ADDRESS UPDATES TO THE MINISTRIES AT THE VARIOUS CAMPUSES.** **+ BEGIN A GROUP E-MAIL LIST** so the students and your team can keep in touch with each other. Send a note every now and then (perhaps once a month?).

# 10 October

**+ WRITE SHORT NOTES TO EACH OF THE STUDENTS.** Personal mail, even a postcard, can be the highlight of a week. Ask them how they are doing. Inquire what they're thinking about these days & invite a response. (Listen for questions and connections with faith... some of the themes might give you ideas or an opportunity for further conversation.)

# 11 November

**+ SEND SOMETHING FUN, ENCOURAGING OR NUTRITIOUS!** Most students are deep into mid-term exams in November (imagine: late nights, not enough sleep, too much to do, everyone on edge...) If your surprise is something to share, it just might result in a break with friends, which always helps. Just imagine the smiles on the faces of the recipients and the wonder in the eyes of the friends when your students say, "Hey, come see what my church sent me!" **+ BEGIN PLANS FOR YOUR COLLEGE RECOGNITION SUNDAY. + CHECK IN WITH THE FAMILIES OF YOUR STUDENTS.** Sometimes transitions are tough!

# 12 December

**+ SEND AN ADVENT CALENDAR OR A DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET AND AN ENCOURAGING NOTE.** Pray for peace and sleep and sanity and wisdom...and safe travels when it's time to come home. **+ HOLD COLLEGE RECOGNITION SUNDAY.** Challenge the students to link their unfolding lives with God's creative & redemptive activity for the world. Follow the service with a reception. Take the students' pictures and prepare a display for your bulletin board. Ask how life is going. Listen well for themes of faith, spirit, unfolding self...



## Visit Us At:

**WWW.ELCA.ORG/  
CAMPUSMINISTRY**

The ELCA's web page features an electronic student referral system as well as resources, ideas, celebrations, and links. You'll also find opportunities to support campus ministry and to apply for jobs within the system.

# 1 January

**+ ASK THE CONGREGATION TO NOTICE** the pictures of their students! Invite ongoing prayers for students. Thank the teachers in your midst. **+ SEND A THANK-YOU NOTE** to each of the students who participated in College Recognition Sunday.

# 2 February

**+ BE SURE YOUR ADDRESS LIST IS UPDATED.** It's not uncommon for students to change addresses and sometimes even colleges during the school year. **+ ENCOURAGE A CHURCH GROUP OR A SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS TO SEND "CARE PACKAGES" TO STUDENTS.** These are welcome anytime! You might include cookies, candy, gum, a Lenten devotional booklet, a personal note.