

# “GRADUATION CELEBRATION”

(May Lesson)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

**Key verses: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 21, 26-27**

**Objective: To function as the Body of Christ by giving thanks for those God has given to be part of our community and by praying for their needs**

**The Set up:** Minimal

## **The Plan:**

- **Hook:** Memories & Advice (10 mins)
  - Each youth gets a notecard. On the front, they write advice to each other (grads to group and then group to grads). On the back, they write memories of each other.
- **Book:** One for all, and all for one (5-10 mins)
  - “If one part suffers, all suffer; if one part is honored, all rejoice”.
- **Look:** Being the Body (30 mins)
  - Allow youth to share their advice to each other, and their stories/memories
  - Let Grads share their prayer requests, and have the group pray for them
- **Took:** Marked as Christ’s own (5 mins)
  - Give the grads a something that means they belong to our “Body” of Christ.

## **The Supplies:**

- Copy of lesson
- Notecards
- Pens
- Bibles (or verses projected or printed on handouts)
- Tokens (you will have to decide what this is for your group, see ideas below)

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**Advice & Memories** (Hook, 10 mins)

In this section, youth will reflect on what they want to say to each other: what the grads want to say to the group, and what the group wants to say to the grads.

- Give each youth a notecard and a pen
- This is silent reflection time
- On the front, they'll write down what advice they have for each other
- On the back, they'll write down memories and stories.
  - As the leader, try to remember stories of each grad, like the first time you met, or a time memory that really captures their personality
  - Prompt the group to try to remember the first time they met each grad.
  - Reflection questions to help them think:

Group	Grads
Advice: What do grads need to know as they go? What have you learned from watching the grads (these should be positive examples)?	Advice: What advice would you leave with the group that you've learned over the years? What are the most important things they should remember?
Stories/Memories: What is one positive memory of each grad that stands out? How did you meet each grad?	Stories/Memories: What special stories and memories do you have about being a part of this community?

- Give them time to complete this activity.

**Transition:** We belong to each other. We have a shared history, memories, stories. We have a shared space. Together we are the Body of Christ, and we are called to care for each other, no matter what is going on in our lives.

## **“All for One and One for All”** (Book, 5 mins)

In this section, the idea that we belong to each other will be reinforced, especially that the graduates still belong to a Body of Christ, even if they are going away...they will always have a home with us; we need them and claim them as our own in Christ.

- Read the 1 Corinthians 12. You can read the whole thing, or just focus on the verses below.
- If you have more time, you can also add a discussion about who (Grads) would be what part in the Body and why

### **Mini-Lecture:** (Say something like)

Graduates, you were placed among us for a reason. We have needed you. And we will still need you. We are part of your Body in Christ, and you are part of our Body in Christ. And you will always be part of us. We are called to suffer with those who suffer and rejoice with those who rejoice, and we are suffering in that we won't be relating to each other in the same way we have, and we will miss you. But we are also rejoicing, because we are so proud of you, and so excited to see the good plans God has in store for you! We are the Body of Christ, and 1 Corinthians says that each one of us is a part of it. You may find other communities in Christ, but know that you will always have a home here and be part of us, too.

### **1 Corinthians 12 (NIV)**

*<sup>12</sup>Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For we were all baptized by<sup>q</sup> one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup>Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

*<sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”*

*<sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

**Transition:** Let's share a little bit about what we have meant to each other as we have lived together as the Body of Christ in this community.

### **Being the Body** (Look, 30 mins)

In this part, they will be acting as the Body of Christ. They will be rejoicing at the community in Christ these Grads have helped create, and they'll be thanking God for each Grad who has contributed to the Body and that community. Each has given something the Body has needed. They will also be sharing each other's sufferings and burdens by praying for the Grads as they go. They'll begin by affirming one another by sharing their advice and stories about each other. Ground rules are that it needs to be affirming to that person. Then they'll move in to prayer time for each Grad.

### **Story Time (20 mins)**

- Gather youth in a circle
- Group shares their advice to Grads, the Grads to the Group
- Grads share their special memories of being part of this group
- Group shares their special memories of what the Grads bring to the group

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### **Prayer Time (10 mins)**

- Gather grads in an inner circle. This can be in chairs or standing, or just the Grads in chairs
- Youth make an outer circle surrounding the grads.
- Prompt each grad to share whatever they want the group to prayer for: any anxieties or things they are nervous or worried about, anything they are sad about or grieving.
- One by one, allow the group to pray for each Grad's prayer requests.
- If you have a lot of grads, you may need to adjust the anticipated time this will take.

**Transition:** We'd like to give you (another) outward and visible sign that you are marked as one of our community, part of our Body. You were marked in your Baptism, and we give you these tokens as a tangible reminder that you are still marked as one of our Christian family.

### **Marked as Christ's Own** (Took, 5-10 mins)

This is where we give each Grad something to signify that they are part of our group, that we love them, and claim them as a part of our Body, and they always will have a place and a home here. This is a mark or sign of their belonging.

Some ideas of what that "mark" or sign of their belonging might look like:

- You could have a priest come and mark them/bless them again
- You can give them something that is a sign of your group (a t-shirt, bumpersticker, Bible cover, notebook, journal, etc. with your group's name on it)
- You can give them something that is unique to each Grad, like a symbol of which part of the Body they are (like those dollar store clapper hands if they're a hand, or a hackie sack if they're a foot, etc. You could have a whole bunch of these symbols on hand so they can decide together that night which part they are, or you could have the group decide in advance what role they have played for the group)
- You can give them something that is unique to your group, like if your group's thing is mission trips every summer, a map with all the places the group has gone
- You can do a picture slideshow of youth group memories and events, and/or print out some of the pics for them to take with them as a reminder
- You can give them heart stickers or temporary tattoos to signify the love we have, and that they will always be loved.
- The possibilities are endless. Try to be creative to find something that fits your group!

**Close in prayer**, thanking God for the community God has given us in Christ, and asking God to bless the Grads.

**Other resources:**

*The lesson above is geared to a smaller youth group setting, not a more public worship setting. If you'd like to recognize the Grads during worship, here is an adaptation of the Commissioning of an Evangelist to be used for that purpose. Sponsors are generally Sunday School teachers or Youth Workers.*

**Commissioning of the Graduates**

**The Examination**

*The congregation is seated, the celebrant stands in full view of the people. The sponsors and candidates stand facing the celebrant.*

*Celebrant*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, we are all baptized by the one Spirit into one Body, and given gifts for a variety of ministries for the common good. Our purpose is to commission these persons in the Name of God and of this congregation to this special ministry to which they are called.

Graduates, you, having been made in the image of God, have a choice as to how you will live out your Christian walk in the new places to which you are going. You are now called to go forth into the world, fulfilling your Christian duty to spread the good news of Christ's love wherever you go, using your creative power, gifts and talents, to shape the world according to God's purpose.

*Celebrant: You have been called to a go out, spreading the good news of Christ's love to all you meet by word and example. Will you perform this, your Christian duty, with diligence?*

*Candidate: I will.*

*Celebrant: Will you faithfully and reverently execute the duties of your ministry to the honor of God, and the benefit of all the members of the Body of Christ?*

*Candidate: I will*

**The Commissioning**

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

Gracious Father, your Son before he ascended to glory declared that your people would receive power from the Holy Spirit to bear witness to him to the ends of the earth: Be present with all who go forth in his Name. Let your love shine through their witness, so that the blind may see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dead be raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

In the Name of God and of this congregation, I commission you [N., ] as Evangelist to go forth into the world, spreading the good news of Christ's love wherever you go.