



## GET-THE-BALL-ROLLING GUIDE

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.”

**James 2:18**

So, you wanna come to Kirchenwald for the Diaconos program, but you’re not quite sure how to generate momentum in your youth or develop support from the congregation. Maybe it’s the first time you’ve attempted to organize a program of this nature. Maybe you’re just looking for some new ideas. Let us help!

First, it’s important to recognize that your participation in Diaconos will be much more meaningful and easier to bring to life if your week at camp isn’t a stand-alone event for your youth. The celebration of Christian service that happens in Diaconos can be significant step in the journey as your youth grow to understand their role as disciples of Christ. Maybe it’s the catalyst that opens the door to a focused theme of servanthood for the next year. Maybe it’s the culminating experience that ties together prior months of volunteering and conversations on service. Regardless of where it falls in the journey, there’s some important groundwork for you to lay prior to arriving at Kirchenwald this summer.

### THE SET-UP

Establishing an atmosphere of service-mindedness in the months before your time at camp sets the tone for how your group will engage themselves and view their efforts at your volunteer sites. If the idea of spending a week volunteering is foreign to your youth, it might be a little scary and deter some people from signing up for the program. Perhaps the biggest mistake you can make is to just assume the youth in your group will already have an understanding of how service fits into their lives as Christians. Help them to understand what it means to love your neighbor. Don’t let Monday’s Diaconos Bible study be the first time your youth talk with one another about service.

- See if you can modify your Sunday School curriculum to concentrate on Christian service in the months leading up to your time at camp. Kirchenwald has an entire book of verses, activities, and worship suggestions that you’re welcome to draw from.
- Make service the theme for youth group nights. Have a movie night and watch Pay It Forward, or something else that promotes a discussion on giving.
- Practice small acts of service at your church (gardening, cleaning, etc.) and be sure to talk about the value of the work you’ve done. By making regular service a part of the experience for your youth, they’ll be more vested in making Diaconos a priority this summer.
- Look for opportunities to reach out in the community near your church. Do you have a food pantry or soup kitchen nearby? Use these experiences and thoughtful follow-up discussions and Bible studies as an introduction to service ministry.



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## **DEVELOP A CHEERING SECTION**

One of the most significant factors that cause young people to feel disconnected from the church is when the issues they value and feel passionate about are not mirrored in the “established”, older congregants. In order for your youth to feel excited about service, your entire congregation needs to recognize and celebrate the work they’re doing. As the summer draws closer, you’ll want to create an atmosphere of awareness and support around the participants.

- Consider having a “Diaconos Sunday” at church where the program is explained and participating kids are asked to stand. Show them your appreciation as they become contributing members of the church.
- Have youth prepare and serve a spaghetti lunch or similar meal for the congregation after worship. That’s what the kitchen in the church basement is for, after all, right? This brings attention to the cause and also gives youth a taste of what it’s like to serve others. You could even use this as a fundraiser to help defray the cost of coming to camp.
- In the week(s) leading up to Diaconos, include participating youth and the experience itself in the prayers at worship.
- Invite a Camping Corporation staff person to come to worship on Sunday to help promote the program. (Especially if it’s the same day as the spaghetti lunch.)
- Everyone loves getting mail at camp. Recruit a handful of members write and send letters to the youth, encouraging them in their service. (Remember to send letters early in the week so they arrive before campers leave.)

## **THE FOLLOW THROUGH**

In school, when a child read a book, he gives a report or writes a paper afterwards to show how he’s comprehended the material. This is a valuable model after the Diaconos experience, as well. Don’t miss the opportunity to debrief the week as a group and in a one-on-one setting. How has their understanding of Christian service grown in their time at Kirchenwald? If you’ve done a good job “developing a cheering section”, the rest of the congregation will be asking that question as well. Give the youth the opportunity to share their experience with the rest of the church. Invite them to talk at the adult Sunday school class or reach the entire congregation through a temple talk. After the service, hold a celebration lunch with a slideshow of pictures from the week. It’s a great way to lift up the work your group has done and to start priming the pump for next year’s Diaconos trip. The enthusiasm your group brings back to your home congregation can be contagious. Consider using that energy to jump-start an attitude of service-mindedness throughout all the members of the congregation. Have the youth take the lead in creating inter-generational service experiences where adults participate alongside of the youth in local service ministry activities based at the congregation and in the community.

Most importantly, have fun and embrace the joy that comes with helping to raise up a new generation of leaders in Christ. Thank you for your efforts and we look forward to seeing you this summer at camp.