



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

2020 Senior Recognition Ideas From ELCA Youth Ministry

Our high school seniors are missing out on once-in-a-lifetime experiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These students have studied hard for years but likely will not attend proms, graduation ceremonies, scholarship or award nights, sports banquets, senior musicals, final choir or band concerts, and other valedictory events that others have enjoyed.

Graduation is a meaningful time for parents as well. They've looked forward to this moment in their child's life, participating in all the school and church traditions. In fact, parents may have been planning their seniors' celebrations since last fall, when these students were first accepted into college, a trade school, the military, or a gap-year program.

It's important for the church to recognize the loss, disappointment and other feelings of these students and their parents. This is an unprecedented time with many unanswered questions, so supporting our young people and encouraging them to stay connected to their faith is critical.

Here are some ideas to show your support. Choose one or more!

- ❖ **Make one of your online services a baccalaureate service or valedictory celebration and invite students to participate wearing their caps and gowns.**
- ❖ **Create a video for each senior. Interview the senior's parents, together or separately, asking them to recall special moments and blessings throughout the years. Interview the senior's pastor, Sunday school teachers and others, urging them to name the senior's gifts and to encourage the senior to live out their faith wherever they go. Finally, interview the senior, asking them about their dreams and future plans.**
- ❖ **Organize a Senior Week, honoring students each day via social media, decorating their yards with signs and balloons, and dropping off coffee, doughnuts or lunch at their house.**

- ❖ **Throw a virtual prom. Ask students to dress up, and have parents stage a photo shoot in their home or yard. Set a theme and create a music playlist of seniors' favorite songs. Dancing with pets and family members is encouraged!**
- ❖ **Ask parents to submit seniors' athletic scholarship awards and video clips of their athletic accomplishments, if applicable. Create your own honors and certificates and create a video announcing these awards.**
- ❖ **Ask musical students to record themselves playing or singing a favorite piece and post the videos on your webpage and social media sites.**
- ❖ **Create a video with congregation members offering congratulatory words and verses for all seniors.**
- ❖ **Stage a drive-by celebration at church with balloons, signs and a laundry basket for each senior. Ask congregation members to fill the baskets with cards, books and other gifts.**
- ❖ **Drop off "care packages" with cards, gifts and celebration supplies.**
- ❖ **Ask congregation members to create homemade posters and place them at seniors' homes.**
- ❖ **Post yard signs at your church with seniors' names and schools listed.**
- ❖ **Create an autograph book for each senior by asking each congregation member to inscribe a page and copying and collating these pages.**
- ❖ **Professionally purchase yard flags or signs for your graduates:
"Congratulations, Sarah, from your family at Faith Lutheran Church."**
- ❖ **Feature seniors on your social media pages with a picture and their future plans.**
- ❖ **Ring your church bells at the hour of graduation.**
- ❖ **Some congregations create blankets and quilts for seniors. This year, "wrap them in blankets of love" at their homes or invite them to the church altar individually. Record each senior receiving their blanket and include these videos during online worship.**

- ❖ To replace the traditional graduation breakfast, luncheon or banquet, have a meal delivered to each senior's home and gather them on Zoom.
- ❖ Create a photo collage with seniors' class pictures.
- ❖ Present an online reading of Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, Dr. Seuss's *Oh, the Places You'll Go* or a similar title, dedicating it to seniors and sending a copy to each.
- ❖ Theme questions for the seniors: Who in your life has influenced you most? What was the most memorable experience of your school years? What Scripture passage has helped you live your life? What is your dream for the future of your church? What advice would you give to younger students?

Other resources:

www.elcafaithformation.org

www.elcaymnet.org

Video resources:

iMovie Video Editor (Apple)

Windows Movie Maker

Animoto Video Builder

Zoom