

## YOUTH GROUP Parent & Volunteer Manual

Youth Group: Youth Group at Trinity Episcopal Church entails church-sponsored activities for youth in grades 6-12 focused around age-appropriate games, fellowship, social outings, community service opportunities, self-reflection, faith formation, and different forms of Bible study, prayer, or worship.

Youth Group Leader: (The Rev.) Brian Turner

My office is on the main hallway in the church building at Trinity.

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Youth Group Webpage: [Trinity's Website](#) has a page dedicated to the [Youth Groups](#) ([www.trinity-fredericksburg.org/youth\\_groups](http://www.trinity-fredericksburg.org/youth_groups)). This page lists calendar dates for Youth Group activities as well as information about past activities, upcoming activities, contact information, and sometimes pictures from events.

Youth Group Bulletin Board: The Youth Group has a bulletin board in the stairwell of the main church building. I use this board to advertise Sunday Youth Group activities as well as special events. I also put pocket folders here containing Youth Group monthly calendars, registration forms for events, permission slips, and other flyers. As a general rule, any paperwork or flyers for Youth Group can be found on this bulletin board.

Youth Group Email: I send out a weekly usually on Fridays to Youth Group families telling about what will be happening at the next Sunday Youth Group meeting and about other upcoming events and useful information. If you would like to be added or removed from my Youth Group email list, please let me know.

Forms & Permission Slips: Any youth who participates in Youth Group activities should have an Emergency Contact Information form on file with me. This form provides me with information on how to contact a youth's parents/guardians in the even of an emergency as well as doctor, allergy, medication, and medical insurance information. I can provide you with a form or they can be found on the Youth Group bulletin board. For families with multiple youth participating in Youth Group activities, all the information can be listed on one form. Separate emergency/medical forms may also be required for special Youth Group events or Diocesan youth events. For events that take place away from Trinity Episcopal Church, there may be a permission slip that parents/guardians will need to fill out before their youth may participate. I will provide these permission slips in person, by email, or on the Youth Group bulletin board. Generally for events where parents/guardians will be dropping their youth off at another location a permission slip is not needed, as the arrival of the youth signifies to me the parents/guardians' permission. For outside events where a youth is dropped off at Trinity or a parent/guardian is not present, verbal or written permission should be provided to me before the youth participates.

Who May Attend: Youth Group activities at Trinity are open to youth in grades 6-12 who they themselves or their families are members or affiliated in some way with Trinity Episcopal Church. In truth, all youth who are interested are welcome to attend regular Youth Group meetings. Youth are also encouraged and welcome to bring friends to Youth Group activities. For special events such as overnight Lock-Ins, retreats, or Diocesan events, while friends are welcome to attend, it is strongly encouraged that they attend other Youth Group activities in advance.

Youth Group Meeting Schedule: Regular Youth Group meetings are held during the academic year, beginning around the second Sunday in September and ending around the second Sunday in June. Youth Group meetings do not take place over the Christmas holiday break or on Easter Sunday. During the summer (June-August), the Youth Group holds special events and outings at least once a month, including a week-long mission trip.

Youth Group Meeting Times: Regular Youth Group meetings tend to meet for 1.5 hours, often from 4-5:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoons. When the Middle School and High School Youth Groups are meeting separately, each one will meet for 1.5 hours, often with a dinner between the two meetings. In this case, one group will meet from 4-5:30 p.m., a dinner will be served from 5:30-6 p.m., and the second group will meet from 6-7:30 p.m. Special Youth Group events or outings on Sundays may last from 2-3 hours. Overnight Lock-Ins at Trinity will be scheduled from 7 p.m. on a Friday night until 8 a.m. on Saturday. The 30 Hour Famine tends to last 24 hours at Trinity from 7 p.m. on Friday night to 7 p.m. Saturday night.

Youth Group Behavior: Good behavior, respect, punctuality, and friendliness are encouraged for those who participate in Youth Group activities. I want Youth Group to be a safe place where youth can come and be themselves and have fun while also respecting one another, the volunteers, and the space we're using. This year, the Youth Group specifically covenanted at our first meeting to:

1. respect one another,
2. treat others as you want to be treated,
3. raise your hand if you want to speak,
4. listen while others are talking,
5. not hit one another,
6. not throw things (unless instructed to or as part of a game),
7. use appropriate language, and
8. not use cell phones during Youth Group meetings.

## Youth Group Activities

Service Sundays: Service Sundays are Youth Group gatherings held during the regular Youth Group meeting time on Sunday afternoons toward the end of the month. Both middle and high school youth come together to participate in a community service project of some sort. Past projects have included sprucing up the grounds around Trinity, making cards, valentines, or gifts for homebound parishioners, shopping at Target for stocking-stuffers to support Micah Ecumenical Ministries, and stuffing Easter eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt.

Movie Nights: Youth Group movie nights are events held at Trinity or a local movie theater to watch a fun, age-appropriate movie. If held at Trinity, refreshments are often provided. If held at a movie theater, youth and parents are in charge of purchasing their own tickets and refreshments, but Trinity may pay for a dinner afterward at CiCi's Pizza Buffet.

Lock-Ins: The Youth Group holds one Lock-In per year for each of the Middle School and High School groups. A Lock-In is an overnight event held at Trinity, focused around fellowship, games (especially "Sardines"), a Bible scavenger hunt, worship of some sort, an age-appropriate movie, and hopefully a little bit of sleep. Lock-Ins run from 7 p.m. on a Friday evening until 8 a.m. on the following Saturday morning. No meals are provided during a Lock-In although snacks are provided and encouraged to be brought by participants. (Note: Youth who would like to attend Lock-Ins are strongly encouraged to attend 1-2 other Youth Group activities in advance. Friends are welcome at Lock-Ins but should also have attended other Youth Group activities. Due to behavioral issues at Lock-Ins in the past, youth may be asked to sign a Code of Conduct in order to participate, and parents/guardians may be called during the Lock-In if their youth needs to be picked up for not following the Code of Conduct.)

Belvedere Plantation: The Youth Group traditionally takes a trip to Belvedere Plantation during October. Belvedere Plantation is a farm near Fredericksburg which offers fall activities for youth of all ages. Attractions include a pumpkin patch, plantation market & bakery, cornfield maze, barnyard animals, barn with rope swings, pedal tractors, zip-lines, pig races, and a big hill slide. Parents and families are invited to this outing, and Trinity will pay part of the admission cost.

Halloween Party: The Youth Group holds a Halloween Party at Trinity the weekend closest to Halloween. Youth are encouraged to come in costume and participate in age-appropriate games and activities. Halloween goodies and other fall refreshments and treats are often served. This year's Halloween Party will be taking place at Vicky Koch's house in Woodford, Virginia.

Carl's: The Youth Group goes to Carl's Ice Cream in downtown Fredericksburg twice a year, once in November before it closes for the winter, and once in February after it opens up again for the season. A Fredericksburg favorite, Carl's serves frozen custard "ice cream" in bowls, cones, shakes, and sundaes as well as other frozen treats. Usually these meetings will begin at Carl's and then the youth will walk back to Trinity with adult chaperones to continue activities at the church. Trinity does not pay for these events so youth must bring their own cash to buy their frozen treats.

Caroling by Trolley: The Youth Group has a long tradition of going caroling by Trolley to the homes of homebound parishioners. This event takes place on a Friday evening a couple weeks before Christmas. After traveling and caroling for about an hour, the youth return to Trinity for a Christmas gift exchange party. Youth are told to bring gifts costing no more than \$10 as part of a "white elephant" gift exchange with one another. Hot cocoa and cookies are often served.

30 Hour Famine: The [30 Hour Famine](#) is an event organized by World Vision to raise money and awareness for the cause of world hunger and poverty, especially in the third world. At Trinity the Famine is an annual Youth Group event in the spring which includes fundraising before the event, a 24-hour weekend lock-in with no eating (until the end), games, a community service project, and a closing worship service and dinner. Youth who would like to participate are expected to raise a minimum of \$60 for the World Vision cause and fast for 30 consecutive hours before and during the event. During the event youth experience hunger themselves by fasting while also learning about hunger and poverty locally and internationally.

Lenten Series: Each year during Lent, Trinity has several weekly educational offerings for parishioners of all ages. As the Youth Group leader, I offer an age-appropriate Lenten class for youth in grades 6-8. Often dinner is served beforehand, making it a convenient program for the whole family to participate in.

Easter Egg Hunt: Trinity's youth are in charge of setting up and running our annual Easter Egg Hunt held on Easter Sunday after the 9:15 a.m. service. On the Sunday before (Palm Sunday), we hold a Youth Group Service Sunday to stuff hundreds of eggs with a variety of candy. Then during the second half of the 9:15 a.m. service on Easter Sunday, the youth hide the eggs around the Trinity property and after the service help the younger children hunt for the eggs.

Nightwatch: [Nightwatch](#) is an overnight lock-in at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City for youth in grades 8-12. During this event, youth from across the nation gather together to learn about the Cathedral's history and construction, walk a labyrinth, and worship together in the largest cathedral in the world. Trinity's youth travel to New York City to participate in this program every other spring, taking time as well to sightsee and explore the city for an extra day. Since the Youth Group went to Nightwatch in 2011, the next trip will not be until the spring of 2013. Because of travel expenses, this trip costs around \$300 per person.

Mission Trip: Each summer, Trinity's youth in grades 8-12 are invited to participate in a week-long mission trip focused on working and serving a population in need somewhere else in the region or country. Past trips have traveled to work at an Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the Pamunkey Indian Reservation in Virginia, New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, and Appalachia. During the summer of 2012, the Youth Group is planning to return to [Grace House](#) in the Appalachian mountains of southwest Virginia to help those living in poverty with house repairs. The cost for this trip will most likely be around \$420 per person.

SOKS Camp: SOKS Camp is community program supported by Fredericksburg Baptist Church, Micah Ministries, and other local churches and organizations, which help a diverse group of children from low income families at the Heritage Park Apartments in Fredericksburg enjoy a summer camp experience. During the past two summers, Trinity has helped support and staff a week of SOKS Camp along with St. George's Episcopal Church and other local religious groups. The kids that participate in SOKS Camp range in age from 3-18, and Trinity's youth are invited to come work and play with these kids during one week of the summer.

Youth Group Retreat: While nothing specific is planned for this year's Youth Group at this time, there is the possibility that a retreat, ski trip, or other such overnight outings might be planned for youth during the year. One purpose of such an event would be social, while we would also focus on team-building and growing deeper in our faith together as a group.

## **Diocesan PYM Youth Events**

PYM: The Diocese of Virginia's [Parish Youth Ministries \(PYM\)](#) team is a group of high school youth from parishes around the Diocese who help plan youth retreats and service days for other youth to participate in. Ninth-grader Michael Hamilton is Trinity's current youth representative on the PYM. As with Lock-Ins and other special events, it is strongly encouraged that youth or friends who would like to attend PYM events should attend 1-2 other Youth Group activities in advance.

Shrine Mont Weekends: Each year the PYM plans and runs three retreats for youth in 6th & 7th grade, 8th grade, and high school. The retreats run from Friday evening through Sunday morning and are held at the [Shrine Mont](#), the Diocesan camp and conference center in Orkney Springs, Virginia. Youth who attend are accompanied by adult chaperones from their parish. The two middle school weekends take place in the fall while the high school one takes place in the spring. This year the 8th Grade Weekend is October 7-9, the 6th & 7th Grade Weekend is November 11-13, and the Senior High Weekend will be held April 13-15, 2012. The Shrine Mont Weekends cost \$150 per person, and Trinity covers \$50 of the cost for youth attending.

Days of Service: The PYM also plans and runs a Day of Service for youth in grades 6-12 twice a year in the fall and the spring. The Days of Service run from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on a Saturday and are held at various churches in the Diocese. This year the Fall Day of Service is October 29 and the Spring Day of Service will be held in March. Days of Service cost \$15 per person.

Day of Play: The PYM also plans a Day of Play in the spring toward the end of the academic year for youth in grades 6-12. It is held at the [Roslyn Conference and Retreat Center](#) in Richmond on a Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. The Day of Play is a chance for youth from across the Diocese to spend a day together playing games, singing songs, and eating lunch together. The Day of Play costs \$15 per person.

Scholarships: Scholarships and financial assistance are available from the Diocese to help any youth or families in need to participate in PYM events. If your youth is interested in participating in any of these events but money is tight at this time or you have multiple youth participating, please don't hesitate to ask me about financial assistance. The Diocese has money specifically set aside for this purpose and is glad to help as many youth participate as possible.

## **Youth Group Volunteers**

Volunteers: While I (Brian) am the Youth Group Leader, I am not able to do all the work for Youth Group by myself. I do the planning, organization, communication, and coordination for most Youth Group activities, but the execution and running of Youth Group meetings, outings, and special events requires the assistance of a dedicated group of volunteers. Guidelines suggest that there be an adult to youth ratio of between 1:5 and 1:8 for Youth Group gatherings, and it is always appropriate to have two or more unrelated adults present with one or more youth at all times, including while driving to events. Certainly this is not always possible, but Trinity strives to do our best to uphold safety standards and to keep Youth Group activities as safe spaces for our youth to learn, play, and grow. Although I have not necessarily done so in the past, if needed in the future, special events lasting more than a couple hours may be cancelled on the spot if a sufficient number of volunteers can't be found to provide an appropriate adult to youth ratio. If you are interested or able in helping with activities such as these, please don't hesitate to let me know. In the spirit of "many hands make light work," the more volunteers who are able to help with Youth Group activities on a regular basis, the less often each will be needed to help out.

Who Can Volunteer: Any adult who is a member or affiliated with Trinity Episcopal Church is welcome to volunteer with Youth Group activities. Certainly those who have been convicted of child abuse or sexual misconduct are not invited to volunteer, and those who do not enjoy working with youth are discouraged from volunteering. In the past, parents of youth in the Youth Group have been targeted as volunteers. For some, they enjoy this; for others they are busy, they enjoy the couple hours respite from their teens, or they know that their youth would be more comfortable without them present. This year it is my hope to gather a group of non-parent volunteers to help with Youth Group activities, and a list of individuals has already been compiled and some initially contacted. If you or someone you know would like to help volunteer with this important ministry, either through helping with weekly meetings, special events, or in other areas, please don't hesitate to contact me or speak with me in person.

Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: The Diocese of Virginia requires that all volunteers who regularly supervise children and youth outside Sunday morning must complete training in the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse. Free training workshops are offered around the Diocese throughout the year, and a list of them can be found on the Diocesan website [here](#). Fr. Kent Rahm is a certified misconduct prevention trainer and tries to hold such a workshop at Trinity each year. Kent and I are available to help potential volunteers make arrangements to attend one of these training workshops.

State Background Check: Volunteers who plan to regularly work with Trinity's Youth Group are also encouraged to undergo a criminal history and sex offender background check through the Virginia State Police. I can also make arrangements for this to happen.

Drivers: There are also some basic guidelines for those who drive youth:

1. Drivers should never be alone in a vehicle with a child other than their own. (While this is not always possible, we do make our best effort to follow this guideline.)
2. Persons designated to drive to or from the church for a church activity must be at least 18 years old and have a valid state driver's license.
3. Drivers must have no record of convictions for the past five years for drunken driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended or revoked license, or reckless endangerment.

## **New Youth Group & Adult Education Offering for 2012**

In an effort to encourage more families to participate in Christian education offerings, Trinity's staff and Vestry decided over the summer to create a new adult Christian education program. This program is targeted toward families with kids in elementary school through high school but welcoming and suitable for adults of all ages with or without kids still at home. This program will run on Sunday afternoons at the same time as Youth Group is held and be followed by a dinner. It is scheduled to start after the new year in January, 2012.

The basic shape of this education program will be the exploration of some particular question over three sessions. The questions may be things like "What does the Church have to say about parenting?", "How should Episcopalians read series like Harry Potter or the Twilight Saga?", or "What is heaven like and will we all go there?" A leadership team from the potential participants is being formed which will pick the questions and plan the three sessions. The first session will be a general discussion of the topic. For the second session, Fr. Kent will lead the group in exploring the question through the Anglican lenses of scripture, tradition, and reason. The third session will wrap up the topic and discuss any remaining questions. The following week a new question will be presented.

As noted above, this adult education program will run at the same time that the Youth Group meeting will be held. It is not clear yet how this might affect separate meetings of the Middle School and High School Youth Groups on a Sunday, although one possibility is that the second group might meet after the dinner.

During the education time there will also be a new offering for children in grades five and below, and the Nursery will be available for infants. The children's activities will be supervised by a rotating group of volunteers from Trinity and possibly local college students who will offer different programs each Sunday. Such offerings may include a children's choir or music activity, a study hall with tutoring available, a game night, a movie night, and arts and crafts. Club 45 will still be scheduled once a month, and Fun Stars activities should not change.

The schedule for the Sunday evenings will look like this:

4:30-6 p.m. Adult Education, Youth Group & Children's Activities

6-6:45 p.m. Dinner

More details and information about this new program will be provided in the coming months. Some folks may have already received information or invitations to participate in the program in certain ways. If you have any questions about anything related to this program, please feel free to talk with me.

-Brian