

The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration

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To know Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and to make Him known.

Youth Ministry Handbook

Last Updated 09/15/2022

Contact:

Youth Minister

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Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry is for students entering 6th-12th grade. Contingent upon youth interest and participation, there will be opportunities for youth to gather all together and in separate middle school and high school groups. Youth must be in 6th-12th grade to participate.

Parental Commitment and Registration

Parents are asked to register their youth at the beginning of the school year or as their youth initially participate in the Youth Ministry. If they have previously been enrolled, they are asked to update the youth's information (for example: address change, school change, etc.) annually. This includes acknowledging by signature, receiving, and understanding a copy of the policies for Youth Ministry (this document).

Consistency creates a sense of community and parents are asked to strive to have their youth attend youth events on a regular basis. This also respects the commitment the volunteers are making for our youth. Youth Ministry is a ministry of volunteers. Parents are asked to volunteer for at least three events during the school year. These events could be bible studies, fun activities, day trips, retreats, or mission trips. Parents who have children in both Youth Ministry and Sunday School need only to commit to volunteer three times total to either ministry.

Visitors

Visitors are youth whose families are not regular attendees of Transfiguration, or who have attended Youth Group only twice in the current school year. If, after two visits, it is determined that the youth would like to attend on a regular basis then we ask that the youth be officially registered in Youth Group.

Youth Minister

The Youth Minister is responsible for the staffing, curriculum, and continuity of the Youth Ministry. The Youth Minister will be available at most Youth Ministry events. When the Youth Minister is not available, an appointed supervisor will oversee the event. Communication is essential to effective operation of the Youth Ministry. The Youth Minister will make every effort to communicate regularly and openly with staff, volunteers, and families.

Screening of Paid and Volunteer Youth Leaders

Church workers who will have custody or supervision of minors, whether in a compensated or volunteer position, are required to follow the screening and application procedures outlined in Procedures for Leaders in Children and Youth Ministries. Occasional church workers working with youth on a non-regular basis (five times a year or less) must be paired with a regular church worker for that event. All applicants, volunteer or compensated, prior to working with youth, must attend the Diocesan workshop, Safeguarding God's Children.

Individual Commitment

Youth leaders must have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through Holy Baptism and be engaged actively in a personal journey of faith. Youth leaders must acknowledge that ministry to young people is not a substitute for their own personal spiritual growth. Therefore, to be consistent with this principle, youth leaders will strive to have daily personal time of prayer and Bible study, worship on a regular basis, be involved in their own fellowship, and receive teaching on a regular basis. Since consistency creates a sense of safety and is essential to youth ministry, youth leaders will strive to meet with young people on a regular basis.

Team Leadership

A young person should never be left in the primary care of one adult. Teams of adults (male and female when possible) should supervise youth activities. Furthermore, team leadership diffuses the possibility of an adult becoming an inappropriate mentor who thrives on the dependency of the youth as well as an adult having too much influence over an individual young person.

Individual Contact

When one-on-one interaction with a young person is deemed necessary and/or requested by a young person, youth leaders should inform the Youth Minister. Youth leaders should notify and get permission from parents in advance; or, if at a youth event and it is not feasible, notify another adult of the place of consultation and with whom they are interacting and the purpose of the contact. All one-on-one ministries must have a stated purpose related to Youth Ministry goals. Youth leaders should try to have individual contact in a public place, such as in the corner of the youth room, where they can talk privately but are still in view of others. Youth leaders must never be alone in a room with the door closed with young people unless the door has a window. After individual contact youth leaders must briefly provide an overview of the conversation or reason for contact on the Contact/Mileage Log and submit it to the Youth Minister. Youth leaders must immediately report to the Youth Minister if a person is (a) in danger, (b) a victim of abuse, or (c) in threatening to harm themselves or others.

Standards of Conduct

Youth leaders will ensure that all youth activities are conducted in a safe and orderly manner. This will, on occasion, involve using discipline. Therefore, youth leaders accept the responsibility to discipline young people in an appropriate manner when youth engage in any activity that may be dangerous to them or others or are overly disruptive to the group as a whole. Youth leaders may not use discipline of a physical nature or use inappropriate language or insults under any circumstances. Sitting out from an activity and appropriate verbal reprimands are acceptable forms of discipline. Again, per state law, all allegations and/or suspicions of physical abuse will be reported to the proper authorities. Verbal reprimand and redirection to a young person should be done away from the group if possible so as not to shame or embarrass the individual. If a young person requires frequent discipline, or if the offense is especially inappropriate, the leader is to consult the Youth Minister. The Youth Minister will contact and if necessary meet with the parents to discuss the offense. If the individual continues to need excessive discipline, the young person may be asked not to return to the group for a specific period of time. Youth leaders are prohibited from consuming alcohol at any time while supervising youth.

Activities and Events

Every young person that comes to Youth Ministry activities and events should leave feeling welcomed and accepted. Therefore, youth leaders will not use or allow negative humor or physical altercations and will structure the meeting in order to include everyone attending. Once a young person has arrived, they will not be allowed to leave until the event has concluded, unless the youth's parent/guardian and the youth leaders have made special arrangements. If a young person leaves prior to an event's conclusion, parents should be notified by phone as soon as possible. All movies shown at youth events must be screened by at least one youth leader and approved by the Youth Minister. If a movie is rated above PG-13 parents must sign a permission slip to allow their child to view the movie.

Overnight Activities

The Rector must approve all overnight activities in advance. A minimum of two adult leaders of the same gender must be present at an overnight activity. If these conditions are not met, the activity must be canceled. It is never appropriate for an adult youth leader to share a bed or sleeping bag with a young person. Males and females (both youth and adult) should sleep in separate rooms at all events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. If separate rooms are not available, male and female youth participants should sleep on opposite sides of the room with the youth leaders sleeping between the groups. For overnight trips out-of-town, medical treatment authorizations must be in the possession of youth leaders for all youth involved, with copies also left at the church office.

Transportation

Youth leaders should avoid dropping off and/or picking up young people without being accompanied by another adult. Youth leaders should especially avoid being alone with a young person in a vehicle. If this situation should occur, the youth leader must contact the young person's parents to attain permission, and document the incident on the Contact/Mileage Log. At no time will a driver under the age of 24 be allowed to transport youth during a Youth Ministry activity, with the exception of the Youth Minister. Youth may drive between home and a local church event with other youth in the car without any liability to the church if the parents make the transportation arrangements. If transportation is required as part of the event, no person under the age of 24 will be allowed to drive. All drivers must provide proof of insurance.

Meeting Policy

Every youth event is an open event. Clergy, parents, church staff, and parishioners have the right and are always welcome to observe any meeting, at any time. Advance notice is encouraged but not necessary. We do ask that individuals who are not youth or volunteers for the event limit their presence to foster community building between the youth and youth leaders.

Gifts and Relationships

All youth leaders must refrain from giving individual personal gifts or money to youths. Gifts and/or assistance with youth group activity expenses should come from the entire Youth Ministry team if possible. No youth leader is to date or be socially involved with youth participants.

Supervision of Youth Leaders

Youth leaders must meet on a regular basis with the Youth Minister to openly discuss problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings and issues that affect Transfiguration's Youth Ministry.

** This handbook is based off the vestry-approved Youth Policies and Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry with Children or Youth (see below). A copy of this document will soon be available on the church website.

Guidelines for Appropriate Affection in Ministry with Children or Youth

The Diocese of Colorado and The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Workers from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Workers to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Workers working around or with children or youth.

1. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.

2. The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over three years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas other than for appropriate
diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

Appendix – Vestry-Approved Policies

Screening of Youth Leaders

Church workers, who will have custody or supervision of minors, whether in a compensated or volunteer position, are required to follow the screening and application procedures outlined in Procedures for Leaders in Children and Youth Ministries. Occasional church workers working with youth on a non-regular basis (five times a year or less) must be paired with a regular church worker for that event. All applicants volunteer or compensated, prior to working with youth must attend the Diocesan workshop, Safeguarding God's Children.

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Individual Contact

When one-on-one interaction with a young person is deemed necessary and/or requested by a young person, youth leaders should inform the Youth Minister or Director of Children and Youth Ministries. Youth leaders should notify and get permission from parents in advance; or if at a youth event and it is not feasible, notify another adult of the place of consultation and with whom they are interacting and the purpose of the contact. All one-on-one ministries must have a stated purpose related to Youth Ministry goals. Youth leaders should try to have individual contact in a public place, such as in the corner of the youth room, where they can talk privately but are still in view of others. Youth leaders must never be alone in a room with the door closed with young people unless the door has a window. After individual contact youth leaders must briefly provide an overview of the conversation or reason for contact on the Contact/Mileage Log and submit it to the Director of Children and Youth Ministries.

Youth leaders must immediately report to the Youth Minister or Director of Children and Youth Ministries if a person is (a) in danger, (b) a victim of abuse, or (c) in threatening to harm themselves or others.

Standards of Conduct

Youth leaders are to ensure that all youth activities are conducted in a safe and orderly manner. This will, on occasion, involve using discipline. Therefore, youth leaders accept the responsibility to discipline young people in an appropriate manner when youth engage in any activity that may be dangerous to them or others or are overly disruptive to the group as a whole. Youth leaders may not use discipline of a physical nature or use inappropriate language or insults under any circumstances. "Time-outs" and appropriate verbal reprimands are acceptable forms of discipline. Again, per state law, all allegations and/or suspicions of physical abuse will be reported to the proper authorities. Verbal reprimand and redirection to a young person should be done away from the group as much as possible so as not to shame or embarrass the individual. If a young person requires frequent discipline, or if the offense is especially inappropriate, the leader is to consult the Youth Minister and/or the Director of Children and Youth Ministries. The Youth Minister or the Director of Children and Youth Ministries will contact and if necessary meet with the parents to discuss the offense. If the individual continues to need excessive discipline, the young person may be asked not to return to the group for a specific period of time.

Youth leaders are prohibited from consuming alcohol at any time while supervising youth.

Activities and Events

Every young person that comes to Youth Ministry offerings should leave feeling welcomed and accepted. Therefore, youth leaders will not use or allow negative humor or physical altercations and will structure the meeting in order to include everyone attending. Once a young person has arrived, they will not be allowed to leave until the event has concluded unless the youth's parent/guardian and the youth leaders have made special arrangements. If a young person leaves prior to an event's conclusion, parents should be notified by phone as soon as possible. All movies shown at youth events must be screened by at least one youth leader and approved by the Youth Minister or Director of Children and Youth Ministries. If a movie is rated above PG-13 parents must sign a permission slip to allow their son or daughter to view the movie.

Overnight Activities

The Rector must approve all overnight activities in advance. A minimum of two adult leaders of the same gender must be present at an overnight activity. If these conditions are not met, the activity must be canceled. It is never appropriate for an adult youth leader to share a bed or sleeping bag with a young person. Males and females (both youth and adult) should sleep in separate rooms at all events and have separate access

to bathroom facilities. If separate rooms are not available, male and female youth participants should sleep on opposite sides of the room with the youth leaders sleeping between the groups. For overnight trips out-of-town, medical treatment authorizations must be in the possession of youth leaders for all youth involved, with copies also left at the church office.

Transportation

Youth leaders should avoid dropping off and/or picking up young people without being accompanied by another adult. Youth leaders should especially not be alone with a young person of the opposite gender in a vehicle. If this situation should occur, the youth leader must contact the young person's parents to attain permission and document the incident on the Contact/Mileage Log. At no time will youth under 24 be allowed to transport other youth during a Youth Ministry activity. Youth may drive home and a local church event with other youth in the car without any liability to the church if the parents make the transportation arrangements. If transportation is required as part of the event no youth under the age of 24 will be allowed to drive. All drivers must provide proof of insurance.

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Gifts and Relationships

All youth leaders must refrain from giving individual personal gifts or money to young people. Gifts and/or assistance with youth group activity expenses should come from the entire Youth Ministry team if at all possible. No youth leader is to date or be socially involved with youth participants.

Communication

Communication is essential to the effective operation of a Youth Ministry. Youth leaders must communicate regularly and clearly with each other about the program, special incidents and individual needs. Youth leaders must also attempt to communicate regularly and clearly to parents and the parish about the program, special events, and group needs. Advance communication is a way youth leaders demonstrate concern and competence to parents and to the parish community. Furthermore, youth leaders must be aware of and avoid statements and actions that may alienate parents and children, both in overt and covert ways.

Supervision of Youth Leaders

Youth leaders must meet on a regular basis with the Youth Minister and/or Director of Children and Youth Ministries to openly discuss problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings and issues that affect Transfiguration's Youth Ministry.

