



SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

YOUTH MINISTRIES HANDBOOK

1000 N. Mississippi St.
Little Rock, AR 72207
(501)225-4203

A LETTER FROM THE YOUTH MINISTER

Dear Families,

We are so glad you are a part of the St. Mark's community. At St. Mark's, relationship is at the heart of everything we do. This relationship-minded community extends to our youth ministry also. Through our various youth activities we strive to give young people positive peer relationships, solid adult role models and, most importantly, to foster a lifelong relationship with Christ. These relationships are formed through fellowship, service, formation and worship.

In today's world, your child has many commitments and obligations. My prayer is that your family will make youth ministry a priority in your lives— whether its through acolyting, Sunday School or EYC. A firmly planted faith is something that continues to grow our entire lives and bears fruit in the most amazing way. It's not something that is inherent or given to us, but something we must constantly develop. St. Mark's youth ministry strives to provide the tools to help young people find and plant their faith.

I love my vocation and the work I get to do everyday with young people. But it's not something I can accomplish on my own. It takes a village to raise a child up in faith. It takes me, dedicated staff and volunteers, clergy who champion the youth program and, more vital than anything else, YOU. It takes parents who support, foster, fundraise, chaperone, encourage and build up our community. Through this community your young person will gain friendships that last a lifetime, leadership skills and an understanding of their faith. You will gain the comfort of knowing your young person has an authentic relationship with God.

Come, be a part of our village.

Sincerely,

Ashley Haggard
Youth Minister

WHAT IS EYC?

EYC stands for Episcopal Youth Community. We are a community of worship and prayer; of acceptance and laughter; of joy and discernment. EYC is open to all 6th-12th graders and their friends. We meet weekly during the school year as well as other times for special events.

ST. MARK'S EYC MISSION

The mission of St. Mark's EYC is to be a space in young people's lives where they can worship, grow and play in the knowledge and love of God. We endeavor to provide fun, fellowship, spiritual growth and service to others, living out the mission Christ calls us to, loving one another as ourselves and loving God with all our hearts, souls and minds.

OUR JUNIOR HIGH COVENANT

The following is a set of group norms that was written by the Jr High EYC group in the Fall of 2015. Each Fall, our Jr High participants read through, add to it if they wish and sign this covenant as a commitment to their community:

- Be respectful towards each other at all times. This means minding our words, actions and intentions.
- Wait until others are done talking before adding to the conversation.
- Help each other, whether that is supporting physically, emotionally or spiritually.
- Be present. This means leaving our distractions (and electronics) at the door. When we are at EYC we are fully here.
- Remember that we are a church based community and dress appropriately.
- Be your very best at all times- give your best and do your best.
- Do what you are asked by the leaders the first time a request is made.
- Have fun!

OUR SENIOR HIGH COVENANT

Just like our Jr High, our Sr High group developed a set of norms in the Fall of 2015 which they all agreed to abide by. Each Fall, our Sr. High participants read through, add to it if they wish and sign the following covenant as a commitment to their community:

- Be respectful towards each other at all times. This means minding our words, actions and intentions.
- Wait until others are done talking before adding to the conversation.
- Help each other, whether that is supporting physically, emotionally or spiritually.
- Be present. This means leaving our distractions (and electronics) at the door. When we are at EYC we are fully here.
- Be willing to share and be open. The more open each of us is to the Holy Spirit the more we will grow as a community.
- Be mindful of others' abilities. We are each given a unique set of gifts and talents. These should be celebrated, not excluded.
- Resolve conflicts with grace. If an issue arises, handle it with compassion and come to a compromise based on mutual respect.
- Be involved. Not every activity will be your favorite. But it is someone's. Put your heart into it and you will get something out of it in return.
- Have fun!

DISCIPLINE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

We encourage youth to work out any disagreements or issues at EYC through discussion, both with each other and with our youth leaders. Through our covenants we place clear guidelines of behavior for our young people. Church is a place where everyone should feel safe, welcome and loved. That is our ultimate goal at EYC and all of our guidelines flow from that understanding. In the event that behavior issues cannot be resolved between our youth and youth leaders, youth understand that their parents will be called and they will need to be picked up immediately by a parent or guardian, wherever and whenever our event is taking place.

OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECT YOUR CHILD (SAFEGUARDING GOD'S CHILDREN POLICIES)

At St. Mark's and in the Diocese of Arkansas, we take the protection of our parishioners very seriously. All of our staff and each of our regular volunteers has taken "Safeguarding God's Children", a sexual abuse awareness and prevention program created by the national Episcopal Church. In addition, each staff member and volunteer has signed a copy of the diocesan policies about respecting the dignity of children and youth. Please ask to see a copy of this if you would like more information.

As part of our commitment to parents, we make sure to have an appropriate ratio of youth to adults at our weekly events (1 adult to every 10 youth) and overnight activities (1 adult for every 6 youth). For overnight activities we will have female and male chaperones and take the necessary steps to make sure your child is in a safe and comfortable environment while in our care.

Our staff members have all had background checks, have valid state driver's licenses and clean driving records. Our youth minister is CPR, First Aid and AED certified. We keep first aid kits nearby at all of our events.

If you have questions or concerns about our commitment to the safety of your children, please contact our youth minister, Ashley Haggard or our rector, Father Danny at the church (501-225-4203).

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

- That we will provide a safe learning environment.
- That we will provide clear communication of events and activities
- That we will be available to both parents and children. While you may not receive an immediate answer, we are reachable.
- That we will provide opportunities for mental, spiritual and social growth.
- That we provide youth with positive, responsible role models.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

- Communication. We will do our best to communicate information in a timely manner. Please keep in touch with us about conflicts, questions or suggestions.
- Reasonable Participation. It takes a village to raise a child in faith. We work hard to be a part of that village but we need parents' help with meals, chaperoning, fundraising and various other projects throughout the year. Help us help your young person.
- Flexibility. We do our best to be on schedule and finish events in a timely manner. Please understand that occasionally things occur that may put us behind schedule and know that we are doing everything in our power to return your young person to you at a reasonable time.
- Respect our time. We understand that you lead busy lives and do our best to respect that. Please respect that our leaders have lives outside of the ministry as well. Youth need to be picked up within 15 minutes of the end of our events. Please make other arrangements prior to meetings if necessary. Our youth leaders are not responsible for additional arrangements following events.

OUR COMMITTEES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM

This team is composed of our youth minister, youth assistant, youth intern (if applicable) and clergy leadership. Together they plan and implement youth programming throughout the year for St. Mark's.

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This committee is made up of youth, parents and lay members of the congregation as well as the youth minister and clergy leadership. They offer oversight and resources to the St. Mark's youth ministry program. This organization meets every other month during the school year and helps coordinate volunteers, fundraisers and other activities.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM

This is a group of high school students who come together on a monthly basis for leadership training and to volunteer with our tween program (EKC). This group uses these opportunities to act as an example for other participants in our youth programs.

For more information or questions, please contact
our youth minister, Ashley Haggard
501-225-4203 or ahaggard@st-marks.com