

Youth Ministries

2023-2024



The Congregational Church of *New Canaan*



Our Mission

We will foster a community in which our youth may experience and share the love of God. Our community is inclusive of all youth, of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientation or gender expression.

Our Beliefs

1. We believe that the way of Christ offers our youth a life that is abundant, flourishing, and everlasting.
2. We believe that flourishing life is best nurtured in a community marked by love, covenant, and participation.





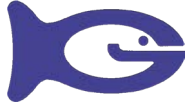

Love: A community in which all our youth, wherever they are on life's path, are unconditionally loved and accepted as they are

Covenant: A community in which our youth share covenantal commitments to clear and understandable values and boundaries.

Participation: A community in which our youth passionately participate in something larger than themselves: the great adventure of loving and serving in God's name.

3. We believe that caring for our youth in a community of love, covenant, and participation will equip them for a lifetime journey following the way of Christ and characterized by faith, hope, and love.

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Our Leaders

Kelly Antonson *Senior Youth Director*

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(203) 966-2651, x824



In her eighth year as Senior Youth Director, Kelly looks forward to encouraging the youth of the church to learn a bit more about themselves and others through giving back. A native of New Jersey, Kelly graduated from St. John Vianney High School in 2007. There, Kelly's passion for service and volunteerism really began to flourish. She was active in her church community and as a volunteer for Michael's Feat, a non-profit that supports seriously ill infants.

Kelly then attended Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, largely due to the welcoming faith community and strong emphasis on community service. She graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Religious Studies. While a student at SHU she led a number of service programs and served as Student Body President. In her Senior year she also found The Congregational Church of New Canaan.

After she graduated from Sacred Heart, Kelly was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Albania to pilot a program using e-readers in the Albanian schools. After returning stateside, Kelly worked in fundraising, first for Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County and then for Inspirica Inc. in Stamford.

Most recently, Kelly began working toward a Master of Divinity at Yale Divinity School. Her intention is to become an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ!

Kelly loves helping youth discover the world through their faith and looks forward to another wonderful year at The Congregational Church. In her spare time, Kelly enjoys returning home to the Jersey Shore to spend time with family and friends. She loves cooking and most of all, spending time with her husband, Steven, beloved children Landon and Ainsley, and their family dog, Rhody!

Emma Garner *Youth Director*

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Emma is a recent graduate of Villanova University with a B.A. in Political Science and a concentration in Military Science and Leadership. During her time at Villanova, Emma was an avid leader in the ROTC program where she had the opportunity to lead and mentor underclassmen. She has been an active member of Alpha Chi Omega and her sorority's philanthropic endeavors combating domestic violence in the Philadelphia area. She also served as a member of the executive board for Villanova Women's Club Basketball, leading the team to nationals this past year.

Emma moved to New Canaan in 2015, which is when she entered New Canaan High School as a freshman and first joined YG and Quest, taking part in several mission trips. She helped launch our church's first Collegiate Fellowship Bible Study group, in which she actively participated after graduating high school. Emma has continued to work with the youth

in our church throughout her college career, serving as an alumni advisor for past mission trips to Boston, Massachusetts and Allendale, South Carolina. This summer, Emma will be leading the Quest group, alongside Kelly Antonson, as they take their pilgrimage to Israel in June. Over the years, she has designed several of the shirts used for YG and Quest mission trips and Vacation Bible School.

Emma's priorities have always been faith and service. She is thankful for the opportunity to work as the new Youth Director this year, serving God and leading the youth in their own faith journeys. Emma believes that God has a unique way of guiding people exactly where they need to be at the right moment. And in this moment, she feels called to serve God as Youth Director and become a resource for our youth as they grow in their faith, learn to serve others, and build relationships with one another.



Allison Wolter *Administrative Assistant for Youth*

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Allison Wolter has a long history with CCNC. She was raised in New Canaan and was confirmed in our church. She and her husband, Jason, were married by Lidabell Pollard in May 2000. Her two oldest boys, Christian and Alex, were baptized at the church as well. For these reasons, Allison is delighted to return to her roots

Allison graduated from Davidson College in 1997 with a BS in Biology and a BA in Psychology. She continued her education at NYU and graduated with a Masters in Reading in 2000. Allison has always loved working with children. Her various roles include: elementary school teacher, reading

tutor, Sunday School teacher, and children's teacher at Community Bible Study (CBS) in New Canaan/Darien. Allison is excited to work with our youth programs and share God's 3:16 love.

Beacons

“YG has been my beacon in the storm of adolescence.”

— YG Senior Ben Honig, 2001

Our youth ministries pursue our mission and enact our beliefs by shining five “beacons” to help our youth navigate their voyage to adult life and faith.

Community

We welcome our youth into a community that is unabashedly and passionately accepting. Our community is counter to a secular culture too often characterized by self-centered competition, judgment, and exclusion. Our youth ministries welcome our youth into a community that fosters a safe space of unconditional acceptance of others regarding love. This community bears witness to the diversity of all human experience, whether it be cultural, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation or gender expression, all are welcome in God’s house and at Christ’s table. Here, a deep sense of Christian community grows out of shared experiences of fellowship, spirituality, service, and just plain fun. In our youth ministries, every child can just be themselves.

Fellowship

Christ taught that God is known and experienced when we keep his commandment to love one another. Our youth ministries understand that relationships are just as likely to grow in zany, exuberant play, as in deeply moving vesper discussions, as in urgent collective action to complete a mission. We gather our youth into small, relational teams, each led by a caring young adult. Our teams draw kids into a community where they form life-long friendships regardless of grade, gender, and social groups. In our youth ministries, every child has a small group to call “home.”

Service

God calls all children out of cramped self centeredness and into participation in larger labors of love in the world. When our youth respond—by feeding the hungry, by housing the homeless, by serving the poor, by seeking justice, by mentoring a child — God’s love flows through them and they experience God as channels of grace. Our youth ministries facilitate frequent, varied, and age-appropriate opportunities for our youth to serve their brothers and sisters in need. In our youth ministries, every child learns that they are already equipped to love and be loved in God’s name.

Spirituality

Our young people don’t just want to be told about God, they want to experience God for themselves. They have a passionate desire to encounter the living God who is passionately committed to being there for them. Our youth ministries introduce our young people to powerful communal prayer, inspiring worship and music, ancient forms of Christian meditation, and revelatory stories of the faith. In our youth ministries, every child learns the practices and traditions that will support their own ecstatic experiences of the transcendent.

Fun

Did we mention that our youth ministries are fun? Again and again, our young people have taught us that they are as ready to engage serious human needs as they are to break into raucous, run-around games — as ready to share their deepest hopes and fears as they are to break into spontaneous dance. Our youth ministries are characterized by a serious playfulness and a playful seriousness. In our youth ministries, every child finds time and space to just be a kid.

Youth Ministries General Information

Weekly Events

We aim to incorporate each of the Beacons at least once a month. Some events are geared toward furthering Christian experience, some are geared toward service, and some are simply for fun and fellowship. In all our programming we seek to create a community where our kids know they belong – to one another, to this church, and most importantly, to God.

Staffing

This program takes the effort of many dedicated individuals. The full-time Senior Youth Director recruits, hires, and trains additional Team Advisors. All staff members and volunteers who work with our youth are hired or recruited in accordance with the church's Personnel Policy procedures and receive training on the church's Safe Conduct Policy. Copies of these policies are available in the church office.

Pictures

We take pictures at all of our events and use the photos for bulletin boards, publications, and publicity. If you do not want your child to appear in the photos that we use, please contact Kelly and we will provide a form for you to opt out.

Emergencies

In the unlikely event of an emergency, parents will be contacted quickly by a parent contact or staff member. If the emergency pertains to a single child, only those parents will be contacted directly.

Participation Guidelines

Regular weekly events are generally held at the church. All are welcome, and new friends of participants should be introduced to the Senior Youth Director or Youth Director.

Behavioral Covenant

All members must act in a manner consistent with the philosophy of our programs. The focus of the program is on people, recreation, spiritual



Youth Ministries General Information



growth, experiential education, and team building in the context of a personalized community environment. As such, respect for oneself and all other group members, the full and part-time staff, is critical and essential.

Disciplinary Action

All youth are expected to adhere to the behavioral covenant, as well as the Mission Trip Ten Commandments (if applicable). All disciplinary actions will be handled on an individual basis.

Ministry Teams

Parent support is coordinated through the ministry teams, made up of parent volunteers. The role of the ministry teams is to provide resources, guidance, and support to staff so that they can administer weekly events most effectively and ensure that each group meets its goals. The ministry teams are also the conduit for staff to communicate issues of importance to the parents of each group's participants.

Middle School Ministry Team (Guppies, JYG, MSYG)

Specifically the role of the MSMT is to:

- Recruit, coordinate, and manage all parent volunteers for MSYG event
- Enforce the attendance policy for Covenant Events
- Manage and respond to parental inquiries regarding programming and Mission Fish eligibility for the Mountainside Mission Trip

- Assist in creating the annual calendar of Minnows, Guppies, JYG, and MSYG events
- Provide advice and counsel to staff as necessary for Guppies, JYG, and MSYG programs and events, particularly in the areas of safety and security

The MSMT is responsible for:

- Managing monthly ministry team meetings
- Meeting with staff at least once a month to review programs and any issues that might have emerged
- Sharing information with co-leads of the YG Ministry Team as necessary

Youth Group Ministry Team (YG, Quest)

Specifically the role of the YGMT is to:

- Recruit, coordinate, and manage all parent volunteers for YG events
- Manage the attendance policy for Covenant Events through the Standards Committee
- Manage and respond to parental inquiries regarding programming and Mission Fish eligibility for the Mission Trip
- Assist in creating the annual calendar of YG events
- Provide advice and counsel to staff as necessary for YG programs and events, particularly in the areas of safety and security

The YGMT is led by a team member who is responsible for:

- Managing monthly ministry team meetings
- Meeting with staff at least once a month to review programs and any issues that might have emerged
- Leading the Standards Committee, which manages the YG attendance policy for Mission Trip eligibility
- Sharing information with the members of the Middle School Ministry Team as necessary



Grades 9-12

Youth Group

What is YG? YG, or Youth Group, is our powerful ministry for high school students. We invite all ninth through twelfth graders to join YG regardless of church or school affiliation. YG usually meets each Sunday evening during the school year for engaging community, fellowship, spirituality, service, and fun. Activities range from team building, to vespers, to service projects, to games, to worship. As they become more involved, many YG “fish” may also choose to participate in Quest, Worship Team, YG Pictures, Junior Advisor Team, or as Senior Leaders.

Many YG fish view our winter Mission Trip as a highlight of their YG year. Perhaps the Mission Trip is better understood simply as an extraordinary, life-changing pilgrimage.

YG Youth Group

Five months of weekly YG experiences of love, covenant, and participation lay the foundation for an intense, nine-day pilgrimage during the public school's winter vacation. Each year our pilgrimage leads us to a shared experience of love and service with a different partner community. Vibrant worship, structured vespers, shared experience, and spontaneous conversations provide robust opportunities to explore and deepen our faith. This pilgrimage then sets the stage for relationships and engagement to grow through the end of the program year.

We believe our youth are blessed with a God-given desire to seek and pursue a relationship with God that is meaningful to them. If we faithfully build a community where they have an opportunity to engage our God made known in and through Jesus Christ, they will come. For more than 20 years, they have come. Last year, 130 youth participated in YG and 90 traveled with us on our Mission Trip. This year, we have

again recruited a staff of caring young adults to be team advisors. We are committed to affording every YG fish an opportunity for meaningful, small group experiences on one of our seven teams. Our calling remains to minister to each and every young person as the infinitely valuable child of God that they are.

YG General Information

Advisors

Advisors will work closely with your children in the team setting and serve as strong Christian role models. The objective of the Advisor is to facilitate ministry on a small scale at the team level of about 15-20 kids. Aside from seeing their teams at Sunday YG events, the Advisor works with the team to hold team events as additional opportunities for the group to bond together.

Though often happy to drive the team together, Advisors are unable to drive individual students home per the church's Safe Conduct Policy. Similarly, team events may be rescheduled if only



2023-2024 Local Service Projects

- Bake-Off
- Senior/Freshmen Mini Mission Trip
- Thanksgiving Service Project (All Church)
- Filling in the Blanks
- Spring into Service Day
- Team Inspirica Service Project



one member is able to attend. Finally, Advisors are unable to babysit, housesit, pet sit, etc. for

YG families. If you have any questions on these or other policies please contact Kelly at

leather@godsacre.org or at (203)966-2651, x824.

Service Projects

As we strive to answer Christ's call to serve, service is a main element to our yearly program. During the 2021-2022 year, YG made meals for Inspirica Inc.; delivered 210 Thanksgiving dinners to families in need, worked alongside our parishioners to assist senior citizens, and partnered with Filling in the Blanks to stuff backpacks for children in need.

Last year, 94 high school students traded in their February vacation to travel on the Mission Trip to San Antonio, Texas. In partnership with Blueprint Ministries, teams of youth worked together to renovate a handful of homes in dire need of love and repair.

Teams

We create teams of 15-20 youth which are each led by an adult Advisor and several Senior Leaders. Our teams draw kids into the community regardless of grade, gender and social groups. Each team has an Advisor who plans bi-weekly activities for the team members to have the chance to get together outside of the larger group and have quality time with each other. Parents will always be notified of these events via email. All team events are optional but play an essential role in creating team unity and identity. The teams enable youth to make close friendships and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Worship Team

Worship Team is a group devoted to exploring the art of worship music and is designed to be an accompaniment to the YG experience. Taking youth who are interested in singing or playing in a band, they lead contemporary worship services for many YG events, each Youth Worship, and occasional Sunday morning services throughout the year.

Worship Team is open to all high school students and welcomes anybody who is interested in being a part of the group, regardless of skill level.

YG Pictures

The goal of YG Pictures is to give youth an outlet to convey what the YG experience is like. Through video and other media, YGers strive to tell the story of each YG year. Youth learn about storytelling and video editing as they examine the YG experience and focus on creating a movie about the Mission Trip.



Financial Support

The Congregational Church provides substantial financial support to the YG program; however, YG looks to supplement that support through contributions and fundraising activities. The primary fundraising activity is the Mission Sponsor Program.

Parents of YG participants who are traveling with YG and are not pledging members of the church are required to make an operating contribution of \$750 to The Congregational Church for each child they have in the program.

There is a fee for participants on the Mission Trip. For 2023-2024, the fees for each participant are \$1,390 for the Mission Trip.

Due to the nature of our trips and the non-refundable tickets we purchase, fees paid cannot be returned. For the Mission Trip only, we will offer information for a third party providing trip insurance at an additional fee for each participant in the event of extreme circumstances such as sickness or injury.

Financial support from the church is available for families needing assistance. For information please call Kelly at (203)966-2651, x824.

Parent Support

In order to provide meaningful and worthwhile activities to the youth, it is crucial for us to have parental support. First, we ask that all parents acknowledge their child's decision to make YG a part of their life, and bolster and encourage his or her journey.

Second, providing activities, transportation, and fundraising for a group the size of YG requires significant support. We ask parents to volunteer to help with at least two YG activities per year. Volunteer opportunities could include food preparation, driving for events, hosting activities, or set-up or clean-up of events. A volunteer form is distributed at the annual Parents Meeting in the fall.

Parent support is coordinated through the YG Ministry Team (YGMT). For more information about YGMT, please see page 8.

YG Driving Policy

The following policy refers to regularly scheduled YG events. It does not cover individual team activities that may take place at other times.

The Youth Ministries staff, Advisors, and parents are eligible to drive YG Fish at YG events. Seniors may also drive, provided that they have had their license for at least one year and do not have any moving vehicle violations over that period of time. In addition, YG Fish with less than one year driving experience are permitted to drive their siblings, however, no other YG Fish may be in the car.

Driving Procedure:

- An Advisor will always lead a caravan to the destination
- All drivers will have detailed driving instructions prior to leaving the church
- Each passenger must be seated facing forward and be wearing a shoulder harness
- Radios must be at low volumes so they do not interfere with driver's concentration
- All passengers are expected to refrain from behavior that might distract the driver
- Drivers will follow all traffic laws
- Parents will be advised in writing and in advance of all YG events that require transportation (car or bus) from The Congregational Church property
- Any parent who does not wish their child to ride with a YG senior may request that an Advisor drive their child instead





Youth Group Mission Trip

The YG Mission Trip takes place during the New Canaan public school's winter vacation. The tentative Mission Trip dates for this year are February 15-24, 2024.

Going on a Mission Trip is a life-changing experience. When youth have the opportunity to work on meaningful service projects with our host partners, they learn God has blessed them with the love and power to change the world.

The Mission Trip is probably best understood simply as an extraordinary, transformational pilgrimage. Five months of weekly YG experiences based in love, covenant and participation lay the foundation for the trip. This pilgrimage is rooted in love and service. We have the privilege and blessing to work alongside a partner community and to explore our faith together.



The program on the Mission Trip includes group work projects, meaningful interactions with community members, prayer, vespers, and worship. During the trip, the youth will help repair existing structures and build new ones. They will work in teams supervised by a YG Advisor and a skilled builder. Safety on the worksite is a priority.

On the Thursday night before we depart, we gather for the Mission

Mission Trips are a way for youth to learn about and live out the Christian call to service and love of neighbor. We do not go on Mission Trips simply because we can. We go because we recognize and embrace God's love for us and God's desire for us to share that love with others and be in community. Putting our faith into action is transformative, and the experiences that youth have on these trips impact them for the rest of their lives.

The YG Mission Trip is nine days long, with a balance of hard work and fun designed to bring a ministry of love and hope to those in need. Participants leave our trip with a changed perspective on their world, and a better understanding of the difficulties faced by those who suffer the burdens of poverty, disability, and neglect.

Trip Send-Off Dinner at the church. All youth and advisors who are going on the trip come together to share a meal and spend the night at the church before we leave early the next morning.

Our trip destinations are typically sites that are not conducive to using ground transportation from New Canaan. Therefore, we use buses to get to the airport and then fly to our destination. Once we arrive at our destination, we use buses or vans for transportation.

Our Youth Ministries staff lead the trip along with the Team Advisors. A squad of skilled builders comes to lead the work projects, a logistics team and other adults also join us for this adventure to further assure that all the participants have a positive experience. We are even lucky enough to have YG alums come back to join the effort.



Covenant Events

The Covenant Events for 2023-2024 are:

- Oct 15: YG Parents meeting (7pm) & Trunk or Treat Service Pt. 1
- Oct. 30: Trunk or Treat Pt. 2 (10:15 – 12:30pm)
- Nov. 5: Team Reveal & Bake Off
YG Mission Trip Forms Due
- Nov. 19: Thanksgiving Service Project
- Dec. 10: Team Name + T-shirt Time!
- Jan. 7: YG Commissioning & Coffee Hour
9:30-11:30am
- Sun., Jan. 28: FUNDing the Mission & MT Parent Meeting
(*meeting required for all kids traveling)
- Feb.12: Pilgrimage Prep (7:30-8:30pm)
- Mar.10: Youth Sunday (9:30am-12pm)
- DATE TBD: Cooking for a Cause with your team
Movies for a Mission Fundraising events

YG Attendance Policy

YG members who would like to participate in the annual Mission Trip are expected to attend nine of the ten Covenant Events. The purpose of the Covenant Events is not simply to mandate attendance; rather it is to help build a sense of community among Mission Fish, which is critical to the success of the Mission Trip. Mission Fish must attend Covenant Events in their entirety.

The Mission Trip attendance policy does not permit late arrivals or early departures to the mission destination. In a rare case, an exception may be made in the event of unforeseen injury or illness.

Absences and Conflicts

All nine Covenant Events are required but ten are encouraged. One event is flexible; this leaves room for absences due to illness and will not impact Mission Trip eligibility. Such absences need to be communicated to Kelly in writing in advance of the event and make up work needs to be completed.

If more than one absence from Covenant Events occurs, the Mission Fish may be rendered ineligible for the next trip (either this year's trip, next year's trip or the Quest trip). In such cases the Mission Fish will be contacted by the leader of the YGMT. The YGMT Standards Committee will then meet to determine eligibility. Furthermore, a missed event requires mission-focused make-up activity.

The YG Ministry Team Standards Committee

The committee will consist of the leader of the YGMT and other members of the team to ensure that there are multiple parent representatives. The Standards Committee will meet only as needed.

The Standards Committee responsibilities are:

- To gather information about any conflict referred by the Youth Directors
- To talk to the YG member and their parents
- To decide how the conflict will be resolved and in the case of absences, whether the Mission Fish will be allowed to go on the Mission Trip or Quest Trip

The procedure of the Standards Committee is:

1. The YG member and parents will be notified in writing that the conflict will be brought before the Standards Committee.
2. The YG member and parents will be invited to meet with the Standards Committee members to discuss the situation, the reason for the conflict, and any extenuating circumstances. All information will be kept confidential.
3. The Standards Committee will meet privately, consider all information, and make a decision.
4. The YG member and family will be notified by phone and in writing.



Tentative YG Schedule 2023-2024

All events are Sunday nights from 7-8:30pm unless otherwise noted. **Covenant events are in bold.**

August

Friday, Aug. 19 – YG Senior Retreat
Sun. Aug. 21
Wed., Aug. 31 YG Veterans Reunion 7:00-8:30pm

September

Sun., Sept. 10 YG Kick-off Carnival 6:00-7:30pm
Sun., Sept. 17 Scavenger Hunt

October

Sun., Oct 1 Family Agape Dinner at church!
Sun., Oct. 8 YG Worship
Sun., Oct. 15 YG Parents Meeting 7:00pm & Trunk or Treat Service Part 1 for Fish
Sat., Oct. 22 Spiritual Flight Night/Senior Commissioning
Sun., Oct 29 Trunk or Treat Part 2 10:15am-12:30pm

November

Sun., Nov. 5 Sr/Freshman Weekend 8pm Saturday night – late afternoon on Sunday
Sun., Nov. 12 **Team Reveal and Bake-off**
YG Mission Trip Forms are due
Wed, Nov. 15 Youth Worship #1
Sun., Nov. 19 Thanksgiving Service Project
Sun. Nov. 26 NO YG – Happy Thanksgiving

December

Sun., Dec. 3 Progressive Supper 7:00-9:00pm
Sun., Dec. 10 Team Name + T-shirt Time!
Sun., Dec. 17 YG/MSYG Christmas Worship 7:00-8:30pm
Sun., Dec. 24 NO YG – Merry Christmas
Sun., Dec. 31 NO YG – Happy New Year!

January

Sun., Jan. 7 YG Commissioning 10am service & Meet the advisor coffee hour!
Wed., Jan. 11th Youth Worship #2
Sun., Jan. 14 No YG
Sun., Jan. 21 YG Faces of Homelessness + Vespers
Sun., Jan. 28 FUNDing the Mission & MT Parent Meeting (*meeting required for all kids traveling)

February

Sun., Feb. 4 YG Filling in the Blanks 7:00-8:30pm
Sun., Feb. 12 Pilgrimage Prep 12:00-1:30pm
Thurs., Feb. 15 – YG Mission Trip
Sat., February 24
Sun., Feb. 25 NO YG

March

Sun., Mar. 3 Team Night
Sun., Mar. 10 9:30am YG Youth Sunday
Sun., Mar. 17 YG Ultimate Ball
Sun., Mar. 24 Create in me
Sun., Mar. 31 Easter Sunday Sunrise Service

April

Sun., Apr. 3 Youth Worship #3
Sun., Apr. 7 Dodgeball 10:00-12:00pm
Sun., Apr. 14 NO YG
Sun., Apr. 21 NO YG
Sun., Apr. 28 Games at Waveny

May

Sun., May 5 Spring into Service
Sun., May 12 NO YG - Happy Mother's Day
Sun., May 19 Movie Night on God's Acre
Sun., May 26 NO YG Memorial Day

June

Sunday, June 2 Beacon of Light Dinner 6:30-8:30pm

Additional Covenant Events (Date TBD):

Cooking for a Cause with your Team
Movies for a Mission Fundraising events



Grades 9-12

Quest

What is Quest? What is Quest? What if instead of just being lectured about God you could experience God yourself? What if instead of just reading about what Jesus said to others 2,000 years ago, you could hear what Jesus has to say to you today? What if instead of just listening to speeches about peace and love, there was a peaceful weekly refuge where you could live out the vision with your fellow Fish?

Now, that would be a Quest worth taking. Come and start this year's Quest, searching after your own understanding of Christian truth and peace

Quest

Quest is a program that serves the dual purpose of enriching both our spiritual and intellectual lives. Quest is open to any and all high school students who seek a peaceful space in their week and a deeper understanding of scripture. Quest is a chance to experience the church's ancient traditions and is open to all those who wish to live out the vision of a small group community.

Quest General Information

Quest tends to our spiritual growth in many ways. We focus on the ancient spiritual traditions of the church. These traditions include meditation forms drawn from ancient monastic traditions (e.g. Benedictine meditations, lectio divina, and Gregorian chant); guided meditations developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola; Quaker “centering down;” Protestant “centering prayer;” Buddhist breathing and walking meditations; and Eastern Orthodox gazing exercises with icons. After a brief introduction, we experience each meditation together and reflect on our shared experience. After reflecting on our experience, we close with prayer.

Quest also challenges us to expand our thinking and develop our own religious and philosophical beliefs while learning from the insights of others. It is a communal discussion of theology, ethics, and our own personal stories and questions of faith. Based in the knowledge of God as revealed to us through scripture, tradition, reason, and



Quest experience, Quest offers an opportunity to gather with other high schoolers and put away questions for tests and exams in favor of asking life's biggest questions, including our own purpose and God's plan for us as Christians.

The goal of Quest is not just to be able to repeat the words of ministers and theologians, but to find our own answers in scripture, prayer, and meditation. We seek to form new questions in the light of our mature reason, and discover new relationships with God through time spent with one another.

As in past years, this year's Quest program will intertwine spiritual disciplines of meditation and small group discussion and prayer. This year, the group will meet on Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30pm.





Our Quest Leadership

Our Senior Youth Director, Kelly Antonson and Youth Director, Emma Garner lead Quest.

The Quest Mission Trip

Service to others is a cornerstone of youth programming at our church and the Quest Mission Trip is a highlight of the year. Each trip provides us with opportunities to dig deeper in our relationships with God and each other; to serve God and one another; and to experience a part of the world and a culture that is different from our own.

The Quest Mission Trip is different from the larger YG Mission Trip, and is limited to 30 participants. The schedule for the trip is designed to continue the practices of meditation and communal discussion that we have engaged in throughout the year. Each day is broken up with breaks for meditation to draw us back to the presence of God, and then rounded out with a time of reflection with our nightly vespers. The smaller group size allows us to dive more deeply into the topics of our nightly vespers and to focus more deeply on serving one another.

In recent years, Quest Mission Trips have traveled to:

- Wilmington, North Carolina
- Barnet, Vermont
- Corozal, Belize
- Baltimore, Maryland
- Crownpoint, New Mexico
- Israel



The Quest Mission Trip is always right after the New Canaan public school year ends in June. The exact dates are dependent on when the last day of school occurs, and the trip will be approximately ten days long.



Grades 7-8

Middle School Youth Group

What is MSYG? MSYG, or Middle School Youth Group, is our exciting and meaningful ministry for older middle school students. We invite all seventh and eighth graders to join MSYG regardless of church or school affiliation. MSYG usually meets on Sunday afternoons during the school year for engaging community, fellowship, spirituality, service, and fun. Activities range from team building, to vespers, to service projects, to games, to worship.

One of the highlights of the MSYG year is the Mission Trip to the Mountainside Treatment Center. This three-day trip in May engages the youth in exploration of their faith and discussions of the dangers of substance abuse as they work and pray alongside selected residents in recovery. MSYG lives in community with the selected residents of Mountainside as they work to restore and improve the facility and experience and embrace God's love.

We eagerly greet the curiosity blessed to our middle schoolers as they explore and discern their relationship with God. We faithfully build a community that meets middle school students where they are, and acknowledges their high energy as well as their thoughtfulness. This year, we have again recruited a staff of caring young adults and high school juniors to be team advisors. We are committed to affording every MSYG fish an opportunity for meaningful, small group experiences on one of our four teams. Our calling remains to minister to each and every young person as the infinitely valuable child of God that they are.

MSYG General Information

Advisors

Advisors will work closely with your children in the team setting and serve as strong Christian role models. The objective of the Advisor is to facilitate ministry on a small scale at the team level of about 12-15 kids. Advisors are unable to drive individual students home per the church's Safe Conduct Policy. Similarly, Advisors are unable to babysit, housesit, pet sit, etc. for MSYG

2023-2024 Service Projects

- Cooking for a Cause
- Thanksgiving Service Project (All Church)
- Salvation Army Bell Ringing
- Everyday is Earth Day
- Bag Lunch Service Project
- Filling in the Blanks

families. If you have any questions on these or other policies please contact Emma at emma@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651, x834.

Junior Advisors

In MSYG we have the opportunity for high school juniors to serve as Junior Advisors. Many of these teenagers were MSYGers themselves and have eagerly sought out the opportunity to work with and mentor our seventh and eighth graders. The Junior Advisors offer an invaluable service to the program. As is the case for all staff and volunteers, the Junior Advisors receive training per the Safe Conduct Policy.



MSYG Middle School Youth Group

Service Projects

As we strive to answer Christ's call to serve, service is a main element to our yearly program. During each year, MSYG provides over 400 service hours via monthly service projects and the Mountainside Mission Trip.

Teams

In order to provide the attention and care our middle schoolers deserve, we create teams of 10-15 youth, each led by an adult Advisor. Our teams draw kids into community regardless of school, grade, gender, and social groups. The teams enable youth to make close friendships and strengthen their sense of community and connection.

Financial Support

The Congregational Church provides substantial financial support to the MSYG program; however, MSYG looks to supplement that support through contributions and fundraising activities. The primary fundraising activity is the Car Wash and Bake Sale.

Parents of MSYG participants who are traveling with MSYG and are not pledging members of the church are asked to make an operating contribution of \$300 to The Congregational Church for each child they have in the program. This contribution is to offset the year long program costs of additional participants.



There is a fee for participants of the Mountainside Mission Trip and Winter Weekend. For 2023-2024 the fees for each participant are \$250 for the Mountainside Mission Trip and \$250 for the Winter Weekend. Due to the nature of our trips and the non-refundable expenses we incur, fees paid cannot be returned.

Financial support from the church is available for families needing assistance. For information, please call Emma at (203)966-2651, x834.

Parent Support

In order to provide meaningful and worthwhile activities to the youth, it is crucial for us to have parental support. First, we ask that all parents acknowledge their child's decision to make MSYG a part of their life and bolster and encourage his or her journey.

Second, providing activities, transportation, and fundraising for a program like MSYG requires significant support. We ask parents to volunteer to help with at least one MSYG activity per year. Volunteer opportunities could include food preparation, driving for events, hosting activities, or the set-up or clean-up of events. Sign-ups are available at the annual Parents Meeting in the fall.

Parent support is coordinated through the Middle School Ministry Team (MSMT). For more information about MSMT, please see page 8.



Mountainside Mission Trip

The MSYG Mountainside Mission Trip will likely take place over the weekend of May 10-11, 2024 and will mark our 24th trip to Mountainside.

Those qualified members of MSYG, staff, and Advisors journey to the Mountainside Treatment Center in Canaan, Connecticut. Mountainside is a spiritually-based treatment facility. It offers innovative and individualized alcohol and drug rehabilitation based on the twelve-step program, addiction education, family counseling, meditation, yoga, and adventure-based initiatives. Our church has been involved with Mountainside since 1995.

Mountainside is situated on an 8,000-acre campus and has been nationally recognized by government and treatment professionals for its outstanding programming and treatment services.

Typical Mission Trip Itinerary

Friday

5:00pm	Mission Fish arrive at church
	Mission Trip rules and goals
8:00	Arrive; hike and set camp
8:45	Welcome by Mountainside staff
9:30	S'mores
10:00	Team vespers
11:00	Lights out

Saturday

7:00am	Rise and shine; breakfast
8:00	Work site safety; work begins
12:30pm	Lunch with Mountainside residents
1:30	Work resumes
4:00	Work ends; free time
6:00	Dinner with residents
8:00	Panel discussion with residents
9:00	Team vespers; final worship
11:30	Lights out

Sunday

7:00am	Rise and shine, pack-up, breakfast
9:00	Hike to mountaintop for worship
1:30pm	Depart Mountainside
3:00	Arrive back at the church

To find out more about its purpose and mission visit their website at www.mountaininside.org.

Mountainside Mission Trip Goals

- To participate in the transformative power of personal ministry and service
- To encounter the very different and difficult burdens of people who are struggling with alcohol and drug addictions
- To experience the joys and difficulties of living and working as a group for an extended period, and the closeness and friendships that result
- To come to know God through experiences of unity, love, selflessness, and service

Mission Trip Basics

The MSYG Mountainside Mission Trip is a three-day mission designed to bring a ministry of love and hope to those in need. Our Mission Fish return from Mountainside with a better understanding of the outside world, and the dangers of alcohol and drugs.

The Mission

The Mission Trip includes group work projects, meetings, prayer, vespers, and worship. During the trip, the youth will help build and repair the facilities at Mountainside. Mission Fish will interact with their team, Advisors, Mountainside staff, and selected residents in treatment.

Mission Trip Requirements

The Mission Trip is open to all MSYG members with the following conditions:

- At least one parent must attend the annual MSYG Parent Meeting
- Mission Fish must attend the two Covenant Events of Team Building Day and Commissioning Sunday, as well as four of the other eight Covenant Events
- Mission Fish and parents must sign and return the Mission Trip application

Transportation

The group travels by bus to and from Mountainside. The trip takes approximately an hour and a half, and food is provided during the trip

Supervision

Each Mountainside Mission Trip is chaperoned by the Senior Youth Director, Youth Director, three part-time adult Advisors, and the high school Junior Advisors. With all of this supervision, the typical youth to Advisor ratio is 4:1.

Sleeping Arrangements

Youth sleep away from the residents of Mountainside and are segregated by gender. Typically, the group will sleep in the lean-tos and cabins located on the mountain.

MSYG Schedule 2023-2024

All events are 4:00 – 5:30pm unless noted otherwise.

Covenant events are in bold

In order to travel on Mountainside MSYGers must be at 6 out of 10 Covenant Events

* = required covenant event

September

Sun., Sept. 10 Kick-off (3:00-4:30pm)
Sun., Sept. 17 Pool Party (3:00-4:30pm)
Wed., Sept. 20 Parent Meeting (7-8:00pm)
Sun., Sept. 24 Scavenger Hunt

October

Sun., Oct. 1 Mead Park Games
Wed., Oct. x MSYG Parent Meeting (7-8:30 pm)
Sun., Oct. 9 Most Dangerous Game
Sun., Oct. 15 Cooking for a Cause
Sun., Oct. 22 Fall Super Day
Sat., Oct. 28 Filling in the Blanks

November

Sun., Nov. 5 NO MSYG
Mon., Nov. 6 – MSYG Lock-In (7:00pm – 8:00am)
Tues. Nov. 7
Sun., Nov. 12 Quarantine
Wed., Nov. 15 Gratitude Youth Worship (6:30-8:00pm)

Sun., Nov. 19 Thanksgiving Service Project

Sun., Nov. 26 NO MSYG

December

Sun., Dec. 3 Salvation Army Bell Ringing (3:30-5:30pm)
Sun., Dec. 10 MSYG Team Reveal
Sun., Dec. 17 YG/MSYG Christmas Worship (7:00-8:30pm)
Sun., Dec. 24 NO MSYG
Sun., Dec. 31 NO MSYG

January

Sun., Jan. 7 Pirates vs Ninjas
Wed., Jan. 10 Youth Worship #2 (6:30-8pm)
Sun., Jan. 14 No MSYG
Mon., Jan. 15 MSYG Faces of Homelessness
Fri., Jan. 19 – Winter Weekend
Sun., Jan. 21
Sun., January 28 Tape A Thon

February

Sun., Feb. 4 Inspirica Service Project (TBD)
Sun., Feb. 11 Mystery Box Challenge
Sun., Feb. 18 NO MSYG
Sun., Feb. 25 NO MSYG

March

Sun., Mar. 3 MSYG-eopardy
Sun., Mar. 10 Dinner on a Dime
Sun., Mar. 117 MSYG Movie Night
Sun., Mar. 24 Choices
Sun., Mar. 31 Easter Sunrise Service (No regular MSYG)

April

Wed., Apr. 3 Youth Worship
Sun., Apr. 7 Teambuilding*
Sun., Apr. 14 No MSYG (Easter Sunrise Service)
Sun., Apr. 21 (No MSYG) Spring Break
Sun., Apr. 28 Everyday is Earth Day

May

Sat., May 4 Car Wash
Sun., May 5 Commissioning/Bake Sale
Fri. May 10 – Mountainside
Sat. May 11
Sun., May 12 NO MSYG – Happy Mother's Day
Sun., May 19 Shaving Cream War (Waveny)
Sun., May 26 NO MSYG – Memorial Day Weekend

Confirmation Class



"It is through confirmation that I have come to understand the Holy Spirit and its significance. Also, I grasped what it means to me. The irony is that I have known the Doxology since 3rd grade but never completely understood it until now. The ending line is "Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost". I came to the realization that the Holy Spirit lives in all of us and urges us to act like Jesus did." – Amanda Hall, Confirmation Class of 2016

Confirmation is a process whereby a young person begins to discern if they want to follow Jesus as a Christian and become a member of the church. For children who have been baptized as infants, their parents have taken vows before God and a congregation to raise their children in the life of the church so that one day those children might choose for themselves to follow Jesus. Confirmation is the time the church dedicates to helping parents and children make a thoughtful decision about their faith.

We realize that there are varying degrees of commitment to the baptismal vows parents make on behalf of their children. Some families steep their children in the activities of our church, while others have had only limited connection to our community during their child's formative years. Our church is committed to helping every youth make a faithful and informed decision about undertaking the Confirmation process regardless of their involvement in the life of the church to date.

Topics Covered Throughout the Year:

- Resurrection
- Prayer
- The Bible
- Jesus 101
- Worship
- The Commandments
- The Congregational Way
- Stewardship
- Service

Because it is impossible to fit twelve or thirteen years of faith formation into a single, year-long program, we emphasize establishing a regular, ongoing faith practice, as well as holding classes to impart faith content to our youth. A teenager participating in our Confirmation program will engage in twelve class sessions that focus on core Christian beliefs, while also regularly participating in Bible study, worship, youth group, and service opportunities. We take the Confirmation process very seriously at our church, and as a result our program is quite rigorous. While eighth grade is the traditional year for a student to make their Confirmation, our church offers a program for eighth graders as well as an option for high school students. This allows youth and their families the opportunity to choose an appropriate time to explore and perhaps affirm their baptismal vows in the Rite of Confirmation.

If you desire to have your children confirmed into the Christian faith, we look forward to partnering with you in that holy adventure.



Please contact Emma Garner for further information at emma@godsacre.org.

Midnight Run

Highlights of the Confirmation year are the two Midnight Run trips taken into New York City in the fall and spring. The mission of Midnight Run is to engage our neighbors in need in New York City. Accompanied by our Senior Minister, staff, and parent volunteers, confirmands serve hot meals and distribute donated clothing from late at night until early in the morning. Our confirmands gain first-hand experience meeting those in need of a meal or clothing where they are on the streets of New York, just as Jesus met those in need where they lived throughout His ministry.

Our youth are transformed not only by the act of sharing clothing and food, but more importantly, by the conversations with the men and women that they meet. These transformative evenings are ones that our youth have testified as being a critical part of their faith shaping experience.



Grades 5-6

Junior Youth Group

What is JYG? JYG, or Junior Youth Group, is the youth group experience for our early middle schoolers. All fifth and sixth grade students, regardless of church or school affiliation, are welcome to join JYG. In general, JYG meets each Monday afternoon during the school year for fellowship, service, spirituality, and fun. Activities range from games, to spiritual discussions, to service projects.

We believe that all youth, regardless of age, can participate in a ministry that allows them to be present in a special community with a sense of belonging. We hope that our children will find in JYG a sense of faith and fun that will continue through MSYG, and into YG and the Quest programs. We believe that all youth can experience and witness God's unconditional love, in covenant with one another and collectively, as a part of something bigger than ourselves.



JYG is an opportunity for our youth to escape from the difficulties of an early middle school career and be part of a program that is all-welcoming, judgment-free, and fun.

JYG General Information

JYG Program Goals

JYG shares a journey of faith, hope, and commitment throughout each year.

The goals of JYG are:

- To create meaningful programs in a safe place in which to experience the challenges of working, playing, and learning together in a community of Christian fellowship and love
- To foster the knowledge and love of God through discussions, activities, friendships, and service projects
- To offer youth an environment in which to discover that they are not alone, to provide a forum to discuss and deal with issues in their lives; and to find people to love and support them through times of happiness, grief, fear, and change

Service Projects

Typically, JYG delivers over 200 service hours via monthly service projects. JYG participates in an annual Overnight Service Trip with long-time church partner, Pivot Ministries in Bridgeport. Pivot treats drug and alcohol addiction as a spiritual problem for the men in their care. They open their doors to us, reflect on their recovery through faith, and we worship with their talented choir.

On Saturday we serve together to beautify their campus.

Staffing

JYG is facilitated by our Senior Youth Director with support from the Youth Director, and a team of high school Junior Advisors. JYG is also supported by the members of the MSMT.

Parent Support

Parent support is coordinated through the Middle School Ministry Team (MSMT). For more information about MSMT, please see page 8.

2022-2023 Service Projects

- Care Package Service Project
- Thanksgiving Service Project (All Church)
- Acts of Kindness Day
- Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Tentative JYG Schedule 2023-2024

All events run from 4:15-5:30pm unless noted otherwise.

September

Mon., Sept. 11	Rain Gutter Ice Cream Social
Mon., Sept. 18	Joseph and His Brothers
Mon., Sept. 25	The Last Will Be First

October

Mon., Oct. 2	The Greatest Commandment
Mon., Oct. 9	Alumni Care Packages
Mon., Oct. 16	Power of Prayer
Mon., Oct. 23	JYG Late Night (6:00-9:00pm)

November

Mon., Nov. 6	Humility
Mon., Nov. 13	Thanksgiving Service Project
Wed., Nov. 15	Gratitude Youth Worship
Mon., Nov. 20	NO JYG
Mon., Nov. 27	(Parable of the) Talent Show

December

Mon., Dec. 4	Salvation Army Bell Ringing and Dinner in Town (4:00-6:00pm)
Mon., Dec. 11	Advent Rap Party
Mon., Dec. 18	Christmas Worship (K-6th) 4:30-5:30pm
Mon., Dec. 25	NO JYG

January

Mon., Jan. 1	NO JYG
Mon., Jan. 8	10 Commandment Tie Dye
Wed., Jan. 10	Youth Worship #2
Mon., Jan. 15	Samuel and Service
Mon., Jan. 22	Jonah and the Big Fish
Mon., Jan. 29	Parable of the Seeds

February

Mon., Feb 5	Feeding 100 Service Project
Mon., Feb 12	Give it up for Lent
Mon., Feb. 19	YG Mission Trip (NO JYG)

March

Mon., Mar. 4	Cookie Communion
Mon., Mar. 11	Pacific House (4:00-6:30pm)
Mon., Mar. 18	JYG First Day of Spring Worship
Mon., Mar. 25	The Last Supper Game Show
Sun. Mar. 25	Easter Sunrise Service

April

Mon., Apr. 1	Pilgrimage Prep
Wed., Apr. 3	Youth Worship
Fri., Apr. 5 – Sat. Apr. 6	JYG OVERNIGHT TO PIVOT
Mon., Apr. 8	Empty Tomb
Mon., Apr. 16	NO JYG
Mon., Apr. 22	Christian Catacombs
Mon., Apr. 29	Esther

May

Mon., May 6	Good Samaritan Service Project
Mon., May 13	Walking on Water Blowout
Mon., May 20	JYG Carnival
Mon., May 27	Ice Cream Celebration

June

Sun., June 2	Beacon of Light Dinner
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Grades 3-4

Guppies

What is Guppies? Guppies is a youth group program for some of our younger children. All third and fourth grade students, regardless of church or school affiliation, are welcome to join Guppies. In general, we meet each Monday afternoon during the school year. Guppies is a weekly time to engage with the Christian story, as well as an opportunity for our children to join together to learn about God and experience Christ; all while enjoying a variety of activities including games, art projects, and afternoons of service. Guppies is a transformative experience for our youth that helps to foster the process of loving God with a group of diverse children. It is an opportunity, once a week, which creates the space for our third and fourth graders to experience God's unconditional love, be in covenant with God and one another, and share in a collective Christian journey that is larger than ourselves.

Guppies

Guppies often connects to the church school, allowing our youth multiple ways to engage in the Biblical narrative while getting to know one another better, both on Sunday mornings and Thursday afternoons. It is a place for our children to grow in their early Christian faith journey while experiencing a ton of fun along the way.

Over the years, our vibrant youth program has continued to grow.

Guppies now includes more than 32 regular weekly meetings and service projects.

Guppies General Information

Guppies Program Goals

Guppies share a journey of faith, hope, and commitment throughout each year.

The goals of Guppies are:

- To create meaningful programs in a safe place in which to experience the challenges of working, playing, and learning together in a community of Christian fellowship and love
- To foster the knowledge and love of God through discussions, activities, friendships, and service projects
- To take the lessons learned in church school and reinforce them through games and interactive activities



Service Projects

Typically, Guppies delivers more than 80 service hours via monthly service projects. Staffing Guppies is facilitated by our Senior Youth Director with support from the Youth Director, and a team of high school Junior Advisors. Guppies is also supported by the members of the MSMT and the church staff. Parent Support Parent support is coordinated through the Middle School Ministry Team (MSMT). Please see page 8 to learn more. Drop-Off and Pick-Up All Guppies events are on Tuesday afternoons from 3:30-4:30pm unless otherwise noted. Given our tight schedules we appreciate your adherence to our drop-off and pick-up times.

2022-2023 Service Projects

- Thanksgiving Service Project (All Church)
- Feeding 5000
- Salvation Army Bell Ringing
- Acts of Kindness Day

Tentative Guppies Schedule 2023-2024

All events run from 5:00–6:00 pm unless noted otherwise.

September

Tues., Sept. 12 Rain Gutter Ice Cream Social
 Tues., Sept. 19 Joseph and His Brothers
 Tues., Sept. 26 The Last Will Be First

October

Tues., Oct. 3 The Greatest Commandment
 Tues., Oct. 10 Alumni Care Packages/Sneaker Drive Support
 Tues., Oct. 17 The Wedding Banquet
 Tues., Oct. 24 Ten Commandments/Chief Priests
 Tues., Oct. 31 NO GUPPIES

November

Tues., Nov. 7 Humility
 Tues., Nov. 14 Thanksgiving Service Project
 Wed., Nov. 15 Gratitude Youth Worship
 Tues., Nov. 21 NO GUPPIES
 Tues., Nov. 28 (Parable of the) Talent Show

December

Tues., Dec. 5 Salvation Army Bell Ringing
 Tues., Dec. 12 John Prepares the Way Rap (Share the Word)
 Tues., Dec. 19 Littles Christmas Worship and Cookies
 Tues., Dec. 26 NO GUPPIES

January

Tues., Jan. 2 NO GUPPIES
 Wed., Jan. 10 Youth Worship #2
 Tues., Jan. 16 Samuel and Service (God Calls Us)
 Tues., Jan. 23 Jonah and the Big Fish
 Tues., Jan. 30 Cookie Communion

February

Tues., Feb 6 Pajamajam
 Tues., Feb 13 Give it up for Lent
 Tues., Feb. 20 NO GUPPIES – YG Mission Trip

March

Tues., Mar. 5 Jesus Feeds 5,000
 Tues., Mar. 12 Walking on Water
 Tues., Mar. 19 All Aboard the Discipleship!
 Tues., Mar. 26 Triumphant Entry/Easter EGGstravaganza
 Sun., Mar. 31 Easter Sunrise Service

April

Tues., Apr. 2 Empty Tomb
 Tues., Apr. 9 Doubting Thomas
 Tues., Apr. 23 Esther
 Tues., Apr. 30 The Good Shepherd

May

Wed., May 1 Youth Worship (6:30-8:00pm)
 Tues., May 7 The Holy Spirit
 Tues., May 14 David and Goliath
 Tues., May 21 Jesus, Friends, and Ice Cream!
 Tues., May 28 Playing in the Park

June

Sun., June 2 Beacon of Light Dinner



Grades K-2

Minnows

What is Minnows? Minnows is our newest and youngest youth group for all kindergarten, first, and second grade students. Many of the younger siblings of our older fish expressed an interest in starting their youth group experience even earlier than Guppies. After an amazing pilot year in 2016-2017, Minnows was officially founded. We love watching our youngest fish to experience the love and joy of belonging at God's Acre.

Our monthly events will build upon what Minnows learn in Church School through creative games and programming. Youth Group is a place for our children to grow in their early Christian faith journey while experiencing a ton of fun along the way. Minnows will experience Christ through fellowship with their peers, an introduction to service, and explore the Bible illuminated through art projects and games. We create the space for our Kindergarten, first, and second graders to experience God's

unconditional love, be in covenant with God and one another, and share in a collective Christian journey that is a story even larger than ourselves.

The goals of Minnows are:

- To create meaningful programs in a safe place in which to experience the challenges of working, playing, and learning together in a community of Christian fellowship and love
- To foster the knowledge and love of God through discussions, activities, friendships, and service projects
- To take the lessons learned in Church School, and reinforce them through games and interactive activities

Staffing and Support

Minnows is facilitated by our Senior Youth Director with support from the Youth Director and a team of high school Junior Advisors. Minnows is also supported by the members of the MSMT and the church staff. All staff members and volunteers who work with our youth are hired or recruited in accordance with the church's Personnel Policy procedures and receive training on the church's Safe Conduct Policy. Copies of these policies are available in the Church Office.

Minnows Schedule 2023-2024

All events run from 4:30–5:30pm unless noted otherwise. Every other Tuesday.

September

Tues., Sept. 12	Rain Gutter Ice Cream Social
Tues., Sept. 26	The Last Will Be First

October

Tues., Oct. 10	Alumni Care Packages/ Sneaker Drive Support
Tues., Oct. 24	Ten Commandments/Chief Priests

November

Tues., Nov. 7	Humility
Tues., Nov. 28	(Parable of the) Talent Show

December

Tues., Dec. 5	Salvation Army Bell Ringing
Tues., Dec. 19	Littles Christmas Worship and Cookies

January

Tues., Jan. 16	Samuel and Service (God Calls Us)
Tues., Jan. 30	Cookie Communion

February

Tues., Feb 6	Pajamajam
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March

Tues., Mar. 5	Jesus Feeds 5,000
Tues., Mar. 19	All Aboard the Discipleship!
Sun., Mar. 31	Easter Sunrise Service

April

Tues., Apr. 2	Empty Tomb
Tues., Apr. 23	Esther

May

Tues., May 7	The Holy Spirit
Tues., May 21	Jesus, Friends, and Ice Cream!

June

Sun., June 2	Beacon of Light Dinner
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Youth Worship

As Christians, we are called into community to worship God with all our hearts. Youth worship is an opportunity for the kids in all of our youth groups—Minnows, Guppies, JYG, MSYG, and YG – to share fellowship and a common worship experience.

Our kids already have many demands on their time and are forced to make numerous choices as to which organizations to join, or events to attend. One of the largest factors that helps drive this decision is the presence and participation of their peers.

Youth worship is unique in that it is designed and led by our Senior Youth Director, Youth Director, and our youth. Its music is popular with and cherished by our kids. Its Christ-centered messages are told amidst stories about the school cafeteria, the sports field, and summer camp.

This theology grounded in familiarity and common identity causes worship to be a transformational event. It allows our youth to discover the importance of God in their relationships and daily lives. It is a worship service based on the promise of God's unconditional love, and a covenant with God and one another to participate in a Christian experience that is larger than any individual experience.

We gather for youth worship seasonally. We typically begin with a free fellowship meal at 6:30pm and move into worship from 7:00-8:00pm. All youth of our church and community are welcome to join. Our Senior Youth Director and Youth Director work with the YG Worship Team and members of each of our youth groups to design and lead a vibrant service of praise and celebration crafted to lift up the joys and concerns, the faith, and the questions of our community's youth.

2023-2024 Worship Dates

Youth Worship Dates

6:30-8:00pm, dinner is provided

- Wednesday, November 15
- Wednesday, January 10
- Wednesday, April 3rd





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