

Youth Ministries

2024-2025





Our Mission

We will foster a community in which our youth may experience and share the love of God. Our community is inclusive of youth of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientation and 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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In her tenth 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, Ainsley, and Graham.

Kimmmie Dyrvik *Interim Senior Youth Director*

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Kimmmie has been involved in church throughout her youth and adult life, where she was an active participant of all youth programming and has continued her involvement by serving as a YG advisor for the past three years. A native of New Canaan, Kimmmie graduated from New Canaan High School in 2017. She then attended Wake Forest University in North Carolina where she studied education and environmental studies. She traveled abroad to an island off of the coast of South Caicos, where she completed marine research requirements and completed over 60 scuba dives. She returned to Wake Forest to serve as new member educator for her sorority, Chi Omega, as well as co-lead two new volunteer initiatives in schools outside of campus.

Kimmmie graduated in 2021 with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and a minor in Education. She was accepted as a corps member for Teach for America New York and moved to Manhattan where she started her three year journey as head teacher for a special education preschool classroom in the Bronx. She completed her dual certification Master's degree in birth to second grade teaching and continued in the classroom for a third year. She finished her third year teaching this past June and is looking towards new endeavors outside of the classroom.

Kimmmie has served as a YG advisor for the past three years and is excited about the potential to work amongst the other ages in our youth programming. She has joined the team to support Kelly and the Youth programming staff this upcoming year and is looking forward to the year to come! She continues to live in Manhattan and enjoys spending time running, going on walks with her friends, going to concerts and exploring new ice cream spots (chocolate flavors only!).



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 or Kimmie 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 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.



Youth Ministries General Information

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 in community, fellowship, spirituality, service, and fun. Activities range from team building to vespers, service projects, games, and 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 nine day 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, 140 youth participated in YG and 108 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



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 Kimmie at kimmie@godsacre.org or at (203)966-2651, x111.

Service Projects

As we strive to answer Christ's call to serve, service is a main element to our yearly program. During the 2023-2024 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, 108 high school students traded in their February vacation to travel on the Mission Trip to San Juan, Puerto Rico. In partnership with IPPR (Psychopedagogical Institute of Puerto Rico), teams of youth worked together to renovate and repaint a center for adults with disabilities and additional needs. This experience was one of community and connection between our YG fish and the wonderful adults who live at the center full time.

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.

2024-2025 Local Service Projects

- Bake-Off
- Movies for a Mission
- Senior/Freshmen Mini Mission Trip
- Thanksgiving Service Project (All Church)
- Spring into Service Day
- Team Inspirica Service Project



YG Youth Group



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 \$950 to The Congregational Church for each child they have in the program.

There is a fee for participants on the Mission Trip. For 2024-2025, the fees for each participant are \$1,400 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 email Kimmie at kimmie@godsacre.org.

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 13th-22nd, 2025.

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.



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 alumni come back to join the effort.

The program on the Mission Trip includes group work projects, meaningful interactions with community members, prayer, vespers, and worship. During the trip, 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

YG Youth Group



Covenant Events

The Covenant Events for 2024-2025 are:

- Oct 20 YG Parent Meeting and Senior Commissioning (required for parents as well)
- Oct 27 Trunk or Treat (in AM)
- Nov 10 Team Reveal and Bake-Off
- Nov 24 Thanksgiving Service Project (variety of times to choose from)
- Dec 8 Progressive Supper
- Jan 12 Commissioning Service & Advisor Happy Hour
- Jan 28 FUNding the Mission & MT Parent Meeting (required for parents as well)
- Feb 10 Pilgrimage Prep (7:30-8:30)
- Mar 9 YG Youth Sunday

Additionally:

One Cooking for a Cause event with your team (variety of dates)

Movies for a Mission Fundraising Events

Four dates to choose from:

Sat., Nov. 23 from 9:00AM-11:30AM;

Sat., Dec. 14th from 9:00AM-11:30AM;

Sat., Jan 25th from 5:00PM-7:00PM;

Sat., Feb 1 from 5:00PM-7:00PM

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 Kimmie 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 2024-2025

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

September

Wed., Sept. 4 YG Veterans Reunion (7:00-8:00pm)
 Sun., Sept. 8 YG Kick-off Carnival (6:00-7:30pm)
 5:30pm seniors
 Sun., Sept. 15 Scavenger Hunt
 6:30pm seniors
 Sun., Sept. 22 Bonfire & S'more faith!
 Sun., Sept. 29 Family Agape Dinner (6:00-7:30pm)

October

Sun., Oct. 6 Worship & Dessert! (6:00-7:30pm)
 Mon., Oct. 14 Trunk or Treat Service Part 1 for Fish
Sun. Oct. 20 YG PARENT MEETING -
 Spiritual Flight Night/Senior Leader
 Commissioning

Sun., Oct 27 TRUNK OR TREAT

November

Fri, Nov 1 to Sr/Freshman Weekend 8:00pm Friday
 Sat, Nov 2 night to late afternoon Saturday
 Mission Trip Forms are due

Sun., Nov. 10 Team Reveal and Bake-off

Wed, Nov. 13 Youth Worship #1 (6:30-8:00pm)
 Sun., Nov. 17 Team Name + T-shirt Time!
 Sat., Nov. 23 Movies for a Mission
 (9:00am-11:30am)

Sun., Nov 24 Thanksgiving Service Project

December

Sun., Dec. 1 Contemporary Worship (6:00-7:00pm)
Sun., Dec. 8 Progressive Supper (7:00-9:00pm)
 Sat., Dec. 14 Movies for a Mission (9:00-11:30am)
 Sun., Dec. 15 YG/MSYG Christmas Concert
 5:00-6:30
 Sun., Dec. 22 NO YG – Merry Christmas
 Sun., Dec. 29 NO YG- Happy New Year!

January

Sun., Jan. 5 YG Faces of Homelessness + Vespers
 Wed., Jan 8 Youth Worship #2 (6:30-8:00pm)
**Sun., Jan. 12 YG Commissioning Service & Advisor
 Coffee Hour (9:30am-12:00pm)**

Sun., Jan. 19 NO YG
 Sat., Jan. 25 Movies for a Mission
 (5:00pm-7:00pm)

**Sun., Jan. 26 FUNDing the Mission & MT Parent
 Meeting (*meeting required for all
 kids traveling)**

February

Sat., Feb. 1 Movies for a Mission (5:00-7:00pm)
 Sun., Feb. 2 YG Worship (7:00-8:30pm)
Mon., Feb. 10 Pilgrimage Prep (7:30-8:30pm)
 Thurs., Feb. 13 - YG Mission Trip
 Sat., Feb. 22
 Sun., Feb. 23 NO YG

March

Sun., Mar. 2 Team Night
Sun., Mar. 9 YG Youth Sunday (9:30am)
 Sun., Mar. 16 Ultimate Ball
 Sun., Mar. 23 Create in me
 Sun., Mar. 30 Dodgeball (10:00am-12:00pm)

April

Wed., April 2 Youth Worship #3 (6:30-8:00pm)
 Sun., Apr. 6 Iron Chef Competition
 Sun., Apr. 13 NO YG
 Sun., Apr. 20 Easter Sunday Sunrise Service 6:00am
 Sun., Apr. 27 Games at Waveny

May

Sun., May 4 Spring into Service
 Sun., May 11 NO YG Mother's Day
 Sun., May 18 Movie Night on God's Acre
 Sun., May 26 NO YG Memorial Day
 Thurs., May 29 Beacon of Light Dinner (6:30-8:30pm)

Additional Covenant Event:

Cooking for a Cause with your Team – DATE TBD
Movies for a Mission - PICK ONE DATE



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 one Thursday a month from 7-8:30 for dinner and discussion. Additionally, there will be one Sunday contemporary worship from 6-7 pm.





Our Quest Leadership

Chapin Garner, our Senior Minister, and Kimmie Dyrvik, Interim Senior Youth Director, 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.

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 five days long.

In recent years, Quest Mission Trips have traveled to:

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





Grades 6-8

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 sixth, 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.

MSYG Middle School Youth Group

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 families.

If you have any questions on these or other policies please contact Kimmie at kimmie@godsacre.org or (203)966-2651, x111.

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.

2024-2025 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



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 2024-2025 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 Kimmie at (203)966-2651, x111.

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 16-18, 2025 and will mark our 25th 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.mountainside.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 2025-2025

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. 8 Kick-off Crazyness! (3:30-5:00pm)
- Sun., Sept. 15 Scavenger Hunt
- Thurs., Sept. 19 Parent Meeting (7:00-8:00pm)**
- Sun., Sept. 22 Gross Out Games
- Sun., Sept. 29 Mead Park Games

October

- Sun., Oct. 6 Dinner & Worship (5:00-7:00pm)
- Sun., Oct. 13 Most Dangerous Game
- Sun., Oct. 20 Cooking for a Cause
- Sun., Oct. 27 Fall Super Day (3:30-5:30pm)

November

- Sun., Nov. 3 NO MSYG
- Mon., Nov. 4 – Tues. Nov. 5 MSYG Lock-In (7pm – 8am)
- Sun., Nov. 10 Quarantine
- Wed., Nov. 13 Gratitude Youth Worship (6:30-8:00pm)
- Sun., Nov. 17 Thanksgiving Service Project (MSYG Crashes Church School)**
- Sun., Nov. 24 Filling in the Blanks

December

- Sun., Dec. 1 Salvation Army Bell Ringing (3:30-5:30)**
- Sun., Dec. 8 MSYG Team Reveal
- Sun., Dec. 15 YG/MSYG Christmas Concert (5:00pm-6:30pm)
- Sun., Dec. 22 NO MSYG
- Sun., Dec. 29 NO MSYG

January

- Sun., Jan. 5 MSYG SERVES
- Wed., Jan. 8 Youth Worship 2 (6:30-8pm)**
- Sun., Jan. 12 Four Square Tournament
- Sun., Jan. 19 NO MSYG (MLK WEEKEND)
- Fri., Jan. 24 – Sun., Jan. 26 Winter Weekend

February

- Sun., Feb. 2 Inspirica Service Project**
- Sun., Feb. 9 Tape-a-thon
- Sun., Feb. 16 NO MSYG (MT)
- Sun., Feb. 23 NO MSYG (MT)

March

- Sun., Mar. 2 MSYG-e-opardy
- Sun., Mar. 9 Movie Night
- Sun., Mar. 16 St. Patrick's Day Fun
- Sun., Mar. 23 Fellowship Dinner**
- Sun., Mar. 30 Waveny LifeCare Network**

April

- Wed., Apr. 2 Youth Worship (6:30-8pm)
- Sun., Apr. 6 Teambuilding***
- Sun., Apr. 13 NO MSYG (Spring Break)
- Sun., Apr. 20 Easter Sunrise Service (6:30am)
- Sun., Apr. 27 Everyday is Earth Day**

May

- Sun., May 4 Shaving Cream War (Waveny)
- Sat., May 10 Car Wash (10am-2pm)**
- Sun., May 11 Commissioning/Bake Sale* (10-11:30am)**
- Fri., May 16 - Sun., May 18 Mountainside Retreat Weekend
- Sun., May 25 NO MSYG (Memorial Day Weekend)
- Thurs., May 29th Beacon of Light Dinner 6:30-8:30

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 Sarah Haddad for further information at churchschool@godsacre.org.



Midnight Run

Highlights of the Confirmation year are the two Midnight Run trips taken into New York City. 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 4-5

Junior Youth Group

What is JYG? JYG, or Junior Youth Group, is the youth group experience for our early middle schoolers. All fourth and fifth 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.



Service Projects

Typically, JYG delivers over 200 service hours via monthly service projects where we help to provide meals, create baskets and work together in community to teach our young fish the goal of service work.

Staffing

JYG is facilitated by our Senior 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.

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

2024-2025 Service Projects

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

Tentative JYG Schedule 2024-2025

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

September

Thurs., Sept. 12 Rain Gutter Ice Cream Social
 Thurs., Sept. 19 Peter's Faith
 Thurs., Sept. 26 Adam and Eve - Creation Celebration

October

Wed., Oct. 2nd YG Late Night (6:00-9pm)
 Thurs., Oct. 10 Manna
 Thurs., Oct. 17 A Rich Man's Questions - Alumni Care Packages
 Thurs., Oct. 24 James and John
 Thurs., Oct. 31 NO JYG (Halloween)

November

Thurs., Nov. 7 Zacchaeus
 Wed., Nov. 13 Gratitude Youth Worship
 Thurs., Nov. 14 NO JYG
 Thurs., Nov. 21 Thanksgiving Service Project - Psalm 100
 Thurs., Nov. 28 NO JYG (Thanksgiving)

December

Thurs., Dec. 5 Advent Rap Party with the Wise Men
 Thurs., Dec. 12 Salvation Army Bell Ringing and Dinner in Town (5:00-6:30pm)
 Tues., Dec. 17 Christmas Worship (2nd-5th)
 Thurs., Dec. 26 NO JYG

January

Thurs., Jan. 2 NO JYG
 Wed., Jan 8 Youth Worship #2 (6:30-8pm)
 Thurs., Jan. 9 NO JYG
 Thurs., Jan. 16 Jesus's Baptism
 Thurs., Jan. 23 Night at The Movies (4:00-6:00pm)
 Thurs., Jan. 30 Jesus Goes to Nazareth

February

Thurs., Feb. 6 Feeding 100 Service Project (contact Inspirica)
 Thurs., Feb. 13 NO JYG
 Thurs., Feb. 20 NO JYG
 Thurs., Feb. 27 All Aboard the Discipleship

March

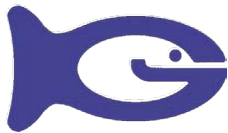
Thurs., Mar. 6 Give it up for Lent
 Thurs., Mar. 13 The Prodigal Son
 Thurs., Mar. 20 JYG First Day of Spring Worship
 Thurs., Mar. 27 The Lord's Supper

April

Wed., Apr. 2 Youth Worship
 Thurs., Apr. 3 NO JYG
 Thurs., Apr. 10 Holy, Holy
 Thurs., Apr. 17 NO JYG (Spring Break)
 Thurs., Apr. 24 Doubting Thomas

May

Thurs., May 1 Good Samaritan Service Project
 Thurs., May 8 Walking on Water Blowout
 Thurs., May 15 JYG Acts of Kindness
 Thurs., May 22 Jesus, Friends & Ice Cream
 Thurs., May 29 Beacon of Light Dinner (6:30-8:30)



Grades 2-3

Guppies

What is Guppies? Guppies is a youth group program for some of our younger children. All second and third 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

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 4:30-5:30 unless otherwise noted. Given our tight schedules we appreciate your adherence to our drop-off and pick-up times.

2024-2025 Service Projects

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

Tentative Guppies Schedule 2024-2025

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

September

Tues., Sept 10 Rain Gutter Ice Cream Social
 Tues., Sept 17 Peter's Faith
 Tues., Sept 24 Creation Celebration

October

Tues., Oct. 1 Adam and Eve Garden
 Tues., Oct. 8 Manna
 Tues., Oct. 15 A Rich Man's Questions - Alumni Care Packages
 Tues., Oct. 22 James and John
 Tues., Oct. 29 No Guppies
 (Trunk or treat that previous Sunday!)

November

Tues., Nov. 5 Zacchaeus
 Wed, Nov. 13 Gratitude Youth Worship
 (4:30-5:30pm)
 Tues., Nov. 19 Thanksgiving Service Project –
 Psalm 100
 Tues., Nov. 26 No Guppies (Thanksgiving)

December

Tues., Dec. 3 Advent Rap Party with the Wise Men
 Tues., Dec. 10 Salvation Army Bell Ringing and
 Dinner in Town (5:00-6:30pm)
 Tues., Dec. 17 Christmas Worship
 Tues., Dec. 24 NO Guppies (Christmas)
 Tues., Dec. 31 NO Guppies (New Year's Eve)

January

Wed, Jan. 8 Youth Worship #2
 Tues., Jan. 14 Jesus's Baptism
 Tues., Jan 21 Pajamajam
 Tues., Jan. 28 Jesus Goes to Nazareth

February

Tues., Feb. 4 Feeding 100 Service Project
 (contact Inspirica)
 Tues., Feb. 11 No Guppies (MT)
 Tues., Feb. 18 No Guppies (MT)
 Tues., Feb. 25 All Aboard the Discipleship

March

Tues., Mar. 4 Give it up for Lent
 Tues., Mar. 11 The Prodigal Son
 Thurs, Mar. 20 First Day of Spring Worship (5 - 6 pm)
 Tues., Mar. 25 The Lord's Supper

April

Wed., April 2 Youth Worship #3
 Tues., Apr. 8 Holy, Holy
 Tues., Apr. 15 No Guppies (Break)
 Tues., Apr. 22 Doubting Thomas
 Tues., Apr. 29 Good Samaritan Service Project

May

Tues., May 6 Walking on Water Blowout
 Tues., May 13 Acts of Kindness
 Tues., May 20 Ice Cream & Jesus
 Tues., May 27 Beacon of Light Dinner (6:30-8:30)



Grades K-I

Minnows

What is Minnows? Minnows is our newest and youngest youth group for all kindergarten and first 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 biweekly 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 and first 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 2024-2025

All events run from 3:30-4:30 unless noted otherwise on every other Monday.

September

September 9 Pictures And Relay
September 23 Creation Celebration

October

October 7 Manna (Slime)
October 21 James And John (Footprint)

November

November 4 Zacchaeus (Plants)
November 18 Thanksgiving Craft (Thank You Card)

December

December 2 Christmas Craft (Angels)
December 16 Xmas Mini Worship

January

January 13 Jesus Baptism
January 27 Pajama Jam

February

February 10 Feeding 100 Project
February 24 Discipleship Craft

March

March 10 Prodigal Son
March 24 Lord’s Supper

April

April 7 Holy, Holy
April 21 Doubting Thomas

May

May 5 Walking On Water
May 19 Jesus Friends & Ice Cream



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.

2024-2025 Worship Dates

**Youth Worship Dates 6:30-8:00pm,
dinner is provided**

- Wednesday, November 13
- Wednesday, January 8
- Wednesday, April 2





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