

YouthMinistry **HANDBOOK**

for volunteers 2024-25



GROWING
BETTER
TOGETHER



HEY THERE!

So you want to volunteer with teenagers, huh? Some people might think you're crazy... but we know better. Middle schoolers and high schoolers are awesome. They're hilarious (sometimes on purpose). They're dramatic. They're complicated. And they're a ton of fun.

But most importantly, middle schoolers and high schoolers are at a stage in their lives where they desperately need someone like you to hang out with them, love them (and like them too), and show them what it looks like to **follow Jesus**.

Whatever your role is in our ministry this year, this Volunteer Handbook will show you some of the ways you can begin making a lasting impact in the lives and faith of teenagers.

I am with you and for you in prayer and in presence as we grow better together!



Anna



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THE BASICS

OUR STAFF

ANNA BLAKE

Youth Pastor

pastorannablake@gmail.com

Anna's goal is to see young people involved, engaged and connected with the local church in worship, discipleship, and fun to lead them toward their next steps in becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Anna's passion is

to teach and equip Christ-centered leaders for the now and for the future.



MADDIE "GRAN" PAINTER

2023-24 Youth Ministry Intern

Volunteer LEADERS:



PAUL BLAKE



ERICA BODKER



RYAN SMITH



HAYLEE SHAMBLIN



JACOB TUCKER



CHERYL ROSS



HOLLY NORMAN



JAYDEN JOHNSON



WILL FORD



JACOB MCCOMAS



HANNAH DIETZ



HEATHER CARICO



BRAYDEN SCOTT



ANTHONY ROSS



VAL ADKINS



JACOB HUGHEY



WALKER PARSONS



SAVANNAH FORD



CARLY DARNELL



ALEIGHA TUCKER



MICKAYLAH SAUNDERS

OUR MINISTRY

OUR ENVIRONMENTS

There are three environments for teenagers in our ministry. Each one is designed to strategically invite teenagers on a journey into deeper relationships with their peers, leaders, and Jesus. Each environment is designed with every teenager in mind - the kid who's grown up in church and the first-time visitor too.

EVENTS: Throughout the year, we'll host several big events designed to help teenagers connect with their peers, their leaders, and Jesus.

Events are often the environment where teenagers will walk into our ministry for the very first time.

WEEKLY PROGRAMS: Our weekly programs happen every single week. They're designed to help teenagers grow in four key areas. (We'll get to those in a minute.)

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS: Discipleship groups are the most important part of what we do. Discipleship happens every week in our programs, but the relationships built in groups extend outside the walls of our church. They're designed to connect every teenager with a consistent trustworthy adult and community of their peers.

OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS

SUNDAY MORNING YOUTH SERVICE

Our middle school and high school (grades 6-12) meets every Sunday for games, worship, teaching, and discussion at Southridge Church at 9am and 11 am.

YTH NIGHTS in the Cafe at Southridge Church

HIGH SCHOOL (grades 9-12) **Sundays** from 6:30pm-8:00pm

MIDDLE SCHOOL (grades 6-8) **Wednesdays** from 6:30pm-8:00pm

YTH NIGHTS are a time for students to grow better together!

(YTH NIGHTS run seasonally in the fall and spring semesters with SRC GROUPS)

OUR BIG WIN

It's hard sometimes to know when you're winning in youth ministry, you know? Like, is anything we're teaching actually sinking in? Are teenagers really growing in their faith? That's why we decided to go ahead and define the big win for our ministry. It's the one thing that we, as a ministry team, want to achieve. It's the goal we want to keep in mind at all times. And it's what motivates and guides everything we do. It goes like this...

WE WIN WHEN A TEENAGER TAKES A STEP TOWARD JESUS ON THEIR FAITH JOURNEY.

TAKING A STEP

Now, we say "take a step" or "next steps" for a reason. It's because there's no finish line or certificate of completion when it comes to spiritual growth. Instead, spiritual growth is a journey (a life-long journey) and no two journeys are identical. That's why our big win doesn't have anything to do with a specific skill or achievement. Instead, we win anytime we see a teenager take

a single step closer to *living out their faith in Jesus* no matter where they are in their relationship with Jesus on their faith journey.

LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH

What, exactly, does it look like for a teenager to live out their faith? We want to help them build the confidence to identify and talk about what they believe about God and make choices informed by their beliefs. We believe there are four things that both lead to, and are a result of, spiritual growth. We call these four things our *four spiritual habits*.



THE FOUR SPIRITUAL HABITS

1

SPEND TIME WITH GOD

This is an obvious one, right? Sometimes it's the only spiritual habit we can name. After all, isn't "growing spiritually" synonymous with "spending time with God"? Well, not exactly, but it's still pretty important. After all, if teenagers are ever going to make their faith their own, they've got to start spending time with God on their own. It means opening the Bible on their own, having conversations with God on their own, and discovering how they best connect with God through worship *on their own*.

2

SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS

Engaging in healthy community can, and should, be a spiritual habit we help our students develop. But "healthy community" doesn't just mean hanging out with Christians. This spiritual habit is about growing in Christlike relationships with everyone.

THE FOUR SPIRITUAL HABITS

3

USE THEIR GIFTS

Teenagers need to know that God made them unique, and special, and with really specific gifts, talents, passions, and resources. Then they need to use those gifts to love God, love others, and influence the world around them. Because when teenagers begin to discover who God made them to be, and then use their unique identity to love both God and others, they grow.

4

SHARE THEIR STORY

Teenagers need to learn how to talk about God. Sharing your story is the spiritual habit of making faith a regular, everyday, go-to topic of conversation in our lives.

Because when we talk about God and His place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in His story), it helps us believe, understand, and to take ownership of our own faith.

We count it as a win whenever a student takes a step toward owning their faith by practicing one, or maybe even all four, of these spiritual habits on their faith journey.

DISCIPLING TEENAGERS

Do you know the last thing that Jesus said to His followers while he was on earth? Some people call it The Great Commission: “Go and make disciples.” Duplicate yourselves. Go and make more of you. Take your faith and pass it on to someone else. When we talk about helping teenagers begin to own their faith, we’re really just talking about discipleship. So what is discipleship? Here are three thoughts . . .

1. DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT LEARNING

Rather than asking, “What can we teach a teenager about God?” we ask, “*How can we help a teenager live out their faith?*” It’s not just about teaching them about Jesus - it’s about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That’s why we spend time together outside of church in groups, events, and life-moments.

Because discipleship isn’t taught in a classroom - it’s modeled in everyday life.



DISCIPLING TEENAGERS CONTINUED...

2. DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

In the Gospels, you don't really see Jesus doing one-on-one discipleship. That's because discipleship happens best in a community of people. That's why we focus so much energy on getting teenagers plugged into consistent groups, why we emphasize the role of parents and families, and why we surround teenagers with tons of Jesus followers. Because discipleship takes all of us!

3. DISCIPLESHIP IS A PROCESS

Discipleship is never really complete because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process. And because we know discipleship takes time, we want to put people in the lives of teenagers who are in it for the long-haul.

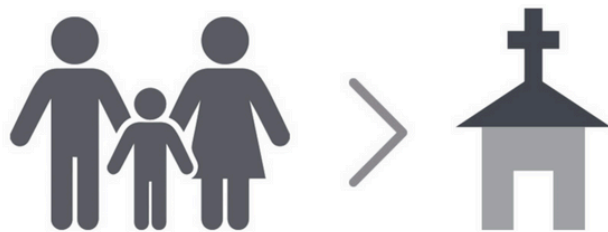
That's why our ministry leaders don't bail on their teenagers after a few months, but stick with them for several years - because it's a process.



ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

As a volunteer, you are making a huge impact in the lives of the teenagers in our ministry. But do you know who's making an even bigger impact in the lives of those teenagers? Their parents.

Before we explain any more about what our ministry is all about, we want to make sure one thing is super clear. (We even drew a picture to help you remember it.) We believe that, in every teenager's life, this is true: the influence of a family is always greater than the influence of a church.



Jim Burns, author of [Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry](#), says it this way: “Long after students stop attending youth groups, they are still connected to their families.”

No matter what, a teenager's family (not their church) will always be the biggest influence in their lives. So doesn't it make sense for us to partner with the most powerful, influential people in a teenager's life in order to influence their faith?

That's why our ministry is committed to serving, supporting, partnering with, and engaging the parents of the teenagers in our ministry.

As a volunteer, caring for teenagers isn't your only responsibility. Engaging with parents is part of your job, too.

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

We already talked about the big win for our ministry - seeing students take a step toward owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished.

Discipleship group leaders (volunteers serving in and out of weekly programming), have a very crucial part to play in seeing the big win accomplished. Here's what we think the win looks like for D-group leaders...

D-GROUP LEADERS WIN THROUGH BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEENAGERS AND HELPING THEM BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEENAGERS

Without a relationship, it's impossible to influence a teenager's faith in a significant way. That's why it's so important for D-group leaders to build strong relationships with the teenagers they lead.

You can't make a teenager own their faith, but you can build a relationship with that student that allows you to love them and influence their faith.

So a D-group leader wins when they choose to love and embrace the teenagers God has entrusted to them. They win when they leverage their relationship to lead teenagers, rather than relying on their position. They win when a teenager sees their leader not as an authority figure they have to obey, but as someone they trust and want to follow toward Jesus together.



D-GROUPS CONTINUED...

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

As important as a teenager's relationship with a D-group leader is, it's not the only relationship that matters. Group leaders win when they help students build relationships with each other because (remember) discipleship happens best in community. A D-group leader isn't the only person a teenager needs to influence their faith.

They need each other, too!

THE EXPECTATIONS

QUALIFICATIONS

- Love Jesus.
- Love teenagers.
- Stick to our Code of Conduct.
- Commit to lead the same group for 1-3+ years.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up in our weekly spaces as often as possible.
- Connect with teenagers regularly outside of church.
- Engage with the parents of your teenagers.
- Plan one service project for your group each year.
- Plan one study (Bible/book) for your group each year.
- Attend special events for teenagers.
- Attend events, meetings, and gatherings for volunteers.

THE GREETER TEAM & “CHECK-INS”

We already talked about the big win for our ministry - seeing teenagers take a step toward Jesus and owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished. Here’s what we think the win looks like for our greeters...

**GREETERS WIN WHEN THEY
MAKE A TEENAGER FEEL
WELCOMED AND LIKED.**

Our greeters are the first people teenagers meet when they arrive and the last people they see before they leave, so they’ve got a pretty big responsibility!

Our greeters have the ability to set the tone for the kind of day teenagers are going to have when they walk into our space. It’s not just about checking them in. It’s about making them feel seen, cared for, and liked. An awesome greeter has the opportunity to begin breaking down walls so that, for the rest of our program, teenagers are more open to connect with others, to connect with their leaders, and to connect with God.



THE GREETER TEAM & “CHECK-INS” CONTINUED...

THE EXPECTATIONS

THE QUALIFICATIONS

- Love teenagers.
- Love smiling.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up to your shifts.
- Wear your greeter t-shirt (in progress).
- Make sure every teenager is greeted with a smile.
- Make sure every teenager checks in.
- Identify first-time guests, get them to submit a “new here” online form, and introduce them to an adult leader they may be with (i.e. new high school guy introduced to a male high school group leader).
- Attend events, meetings, and gatherings for volunteers.



THE CAFÉ TEAM

(in progress)

We already talked about the big win for our ministry - seeing teenagers take a step toward Jesus and owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished. Here's what we think the win looks like for our cafe team members...

**THE CAFE TEAM WINS WHEN
THEY CAN MAKE A STUDENT OR
VOLUNTEER FEEL HAPPY AND FED.**

Food is a pretty powerful thing. Seriously, think about the memories, the conversations, and the friendships you've built around food! A meal, a cup of coffee, or a fun treat can bring people together and make them smile. That's what our cafe team gets to do every single week.

Whether they're handing a seventh grade boy a bag of Doritos, mixing custom Italian sodas for a group of tenth grade girls, or pouring a cup of coffee for a tired volunteer, our cafe team does work that matters. It's not just about the food. It's about the experience of kindness, generosity, and service they're creating for teenagers and volunteers each and every week.



THE CAFÉ TEAM

CONTINUED...

THE EXPECTATIONS

THE QUALIFICATIONS

- Love teenagers.
- Love smiling.
- Love making and serving awesome snacks and drinks.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up to your shifts.
- Wear your cafe t-shirt or apron (in progress).
- Greet every customer with a smile.
- Learn to prepare and serve everything on the menu.
- Keep the cafe well-stocked.
- Keep the cafe clean.
- Attend events, meetings, and gatherings for volunteers.



THE PRAISE TEAM

We already talked about the big win for our ministry - seeing teenagers take a step toward Jesus and owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished. Here's what we think the win looks like for our praise team members...

THE PRAISE TEAM WINS WHEN THEY ENGAGE TEENAGERS IN WORSHIP.

No matter what song the praise team is playing, they win when a teenager actively engages with them and with the music. While we can't expect every middle school and high school student to have a profound worship experience every week, we can at least provide music that they enjoy hearing and singing - music that helps them connect with God and inspires them to better live out their faith. When they are playing, they win when a teenager actively engages with them and with the music playing.



THE PRAISE TEAM

CONTINUED...

THE EXPECTATIONS

THE QUALIFICATIONS

- Love teenagers.
- Have some musical talent.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up when you're scheduled to play.
- Connect with teenagers before and after you play.
- Come to band practice.
- Practice on your own.
- Attend events, meetings, and gatherings for volunteers.



THE FINE PRINT

SAFETY GUIDELINES

As a member of our ministry team, it is absolutely essential that you practice healthy boundaries with teenagers at all times, for their safety and yours. These guidelines exist to protect teenagers from harm and to protect you from false allegations.

NEVER BE ALONE WITH A TEENAGER

If you need to have a private conversation with a teenager, have the conversation in a public place - not behind closed doors or in a room or vehicle alone. Here are some tips to help you navigate through this particular guideline...

- Do not set up one-on-one meeting with teenagers without the knowledge and consent of their parents.
- Avoid initiating one-on-one meetings with teenagers. Allow the teenager or their parents to be the initiators.
- Avoid transporting a teenager anywhere alone. If a teenager needs a ride, arrange to have another adult or teenager ride with you. If that's not possible, politely say no.

MAINTAIN PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Be wise. Maintain healthy and safe physical boundaries with teenagers at all times. This means setting boundaries for yourself, but it may also mean setting and enforcing boundaries with any teenagers who push physical limits. If you have any questions about what is or is not appropriate, talk to our staff, and always err on the side of caution.

THE FINE PRINT CONTINUED...

SAFETY GUIDELINES

LOG ELECTRONIC CONVERSATIONS

If you find yourself in the midst of a sensitive conversation with a teenager, keep in mind that words and intentions can be misconstrued-intentionally or unintentionally. Any time you are engaged in a serious conversation with a teenager, log your conversations (take screen shots, save text messages and jot notes from phone calls or FaceTime). This may seem excessive, but if you're ever falsely accused of misconduct from a teenager or parent, you'll be glad you did it.

REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

As a member of our ministry team, you are a mandated reporter. That means you are legally required to report any dangerous or potentially dangerous situations to our staff immediately. Including...

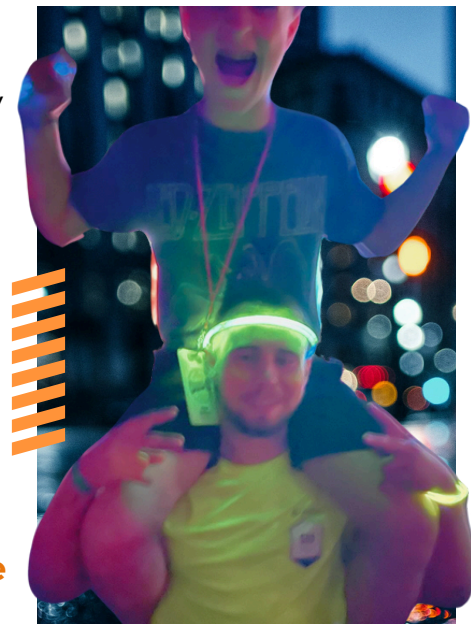
- If a teenager is being harmed, neglected, or abused.
- If a teenager is harming or abusing someone else.
- If a teenager is harming or at risk of harming themselves.

WV Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1-800-352-6513

24 hours a day - 7 days a week

For serious physical abuse or sexual abuse, also contact the state police & local law enforcement.



THE FINE PRINT

CONTINUED...

DEFINING ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE

is any occurrence in which an adult engages in sexual activity with a minor. It could be contact behavior (touching) or non-contact behavior (pictures, spying, exposure, or conversation).

PHYSICAL ABUSE

is any contact intended to cause physical pain or injury to a teenager. The law does permit parents to use corporal punishment, but the discipline has to be reasonable.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

is any non-physical behavior meant to control a person's emotional well-being through behaviors including, but not limited to manipulation, threats, condescending comments, humiliation, and/or any other verbal acts that cause damage and trauma to a person.

NEGLECT

is the failure to provide basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or supervision. Neglect can also include exposure to harmful substances or situations.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Contact a staff member immediately if you see signs of abuse, such as . .

-
- depression
- sudden change in behavior, such as isolation or withdrawal
- paranoia
- fear of their caregivers or others
- aggressive behavior
- anxiety
- bed-wetting or accidents in their underwear
- imitating or talking about sexual behaviors
- wounds or pain
- unexplained bruises
- untreated illnesses
- apparent lack of supervision
- self-harm behaviors or suicidal ideation

THE FINE PRINT

CONTINUED...

CODE OF CONDUCT

As a ministry team, there are a few things we'd like everyone to abide by. Here they are!

ALL VOLUNTEERS

WORK HARD: You are so important to our ministry! We need you! So please, show up on time, give it your all, and be faithful with the responsibilities entrusted to you.

"Do your best... Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ." (Colossians 3:23)

BE KIND: Ministry is all about people, so to be effective in ministry, you'll need to reflect God's heart for people. With teenagers, parents, other volunteers, and our staff, treat people with gentleness, forgiveness, patience, kindness, and love.

"Get along amongst yourselves... And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out."

(1 Thessalonians 5:13-15)



THE FINE PRINT CONTINUED...

CODE OF CONDUCT

SMALL GROUP (Sundays) & D-GROUP LEADERS

BE LIKE JESUS: More than any other volunteer role, small group leaders and D-group leaders have the most responsibility because they have the most influence in the lives of teenagers. While we don't expect anyone to be perfect, we do expect every group leader to be striving to make wise decisions, to glorify God with their lives, and to strive to look more like Jesus every day - especially in key areas like their treatment of others on our team, social media presence, drug or alcohol use, and sexual behavior.

"Watch what God does, and then do it." (Ephesians 5:1)



COMMITMENT

My name is _____ and I'm ready to serve!

- I promise to follow through on my responsibilities. If I can't, for whatever reason, I promise to keep Southridge Church staff informed and to give them as much notice as I possibly can, knowing they'll need to find a replacement for me and that takes time.
- I promise I've read this Volunteer Handbook. I understand the mission and strategy of Southridge Youth ministry and will support the vision and leadership of the staff.
- I promise I've read the Safety Guidelines and will abide by them, for my safety and for the safety of our teenagers.
- I promise I've read the Code of Conduct and will abide by it. If I mess up, I promise to be honest with our staff about my actions and will accept whatever consequences they think are reasonable and necessary, knowing that, while they must always act in the best interest of teenagers, they are committed to treating me with respect, love, and grace.
- I promise I understand the expectations of my role and will work hard to fulfill them. If I'm having trouble fulfilling any of my expectations, I promise to communicate with the staff and ask for help, knowing they're here to support me. And finally...
- I promise to do my part in making a huge difference in the lives and faith of the teenagers who walk into our ministry.

And I promise to have a lot of fun doing it.

SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____



YTH VOLUNTEER WEBSITE



BACKGROUND CHECK



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

SR Youth

