

Dear Friends in Christ,

I pray this finds you doing well. September is here, the temperature is going down, and school is in full swing. It's time to kick off the Youth Ministry program for this year!

I've attached the current schedule of events for the coming year. As the year progresses, I'm sure we'll make changes, adjust dates, add or delete events depending on the level of interest. This is a start to help plan for the foreseeable future.

This will be my 7th year as the Director of Youth Ministry. What makes this so exciting is working with your teens. They are a great group of young people, and I thank you for investing the time and taking seriously your responsibility as their first and most important teacher. The Youth Ministry program is here to help you with that responsibility. Growing in our faith is a lifelong endeavor, one that is never complete. We're not called by our Lord to learn and live our faith just a little, we're called to learn and live always in the grace of God. We can't do it by ourselves, but only through God's grace and mercy, which comes often in the efforts of others to support your responsibility to raise your children in their faith. We are the Body of Christ, and the Body grows together!

On Sunday, 23 September, we will kick-off the year with our traditional cookout and presentation. I invite all teens and their families to participate in this event, a time of fellowship, of eating and playing, of hearing about the events and activities of the coming year. I look forward to seeing you then. We will have the kick-off from 4-7 p.m., so all the activities are in the daylight. As we've done in the past, we will participate in some of the Diocesan activities, such as the Youth Rally in October, the March for Life in January, Mount 2000 in February, Work Camp in June—this year in King George, VA. We'll also have other activities such as lock-ins, a field trip to the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, fund raising for Work Camp, and a return to Mississippi in July for a mission trip. We'll hike in the mountains, campout on the beach, and raft down the river. It will be a great year!

Each Sunday evening, we'll gather to share and grow in our faith. This is the time in the life of a teen when their faith becomes their own, not just mimicking their parents, but growing in understanding and love of God, a more focused effort to discern the Will of God, and a deeper understanding of their role in the Body of Christ. Confirmation is not the end of learning about our faith, but in fact is the beginning of developing a more mature faith, rooted in virtue, practiced daily, and continually developed each day through prayer, study, reflection, and an openness to our Lord. Today, the largest religious affiliation of all persons in the U.S. is none. Yes, they are called the nones, because they have chosen not to affiliate with any religious activity or organization. The majority of those raised in a particular faith, lose that faith between the ages of 18-23, the time they leave the influence of their parent's household and go to college, or start full time employment. For many of the teens, that is just a year or two away. For the freshmen, it's only four years away, and that will pass in the blink of an eye. I and the other adults who volunteer to support the Youth Ministry program are here to help you with the your God given responsibility to raise your children fully in the faith, and we are excited to be able to support you in their faith journey!

I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your support of the Youth Ministry program, as well as the obvious love and excitement you have for your children. You are the head of your family church, and I thank you for inviting us to participate in your church.

As always, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to seeing you and your family on the 23d. Please respond to this email and let me know you're coming and how many will be attending from your family...want to make sure we have enough food.

May our gracious Lord continue to bless you and fill you with the light of his love!

Peace...

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