

St. John's Youth Confirmation and Faith Formation Program Grades 7-12 2011-2012

It is the goal of St. John's to facilitate God's mission of compassion, reconciliation and justice by confirming in the faith those who undergo an initiation of support and faith development. Traditionally, this has been done through teaching that may or may not include a service hour requirement. It is our strong opinion that faith formation is a lifelong journey begun well before confirmation and lasting the entirety of one's life. All members of the faith community are called to live out their baptismal covenant.

The St. John's initiation for confirmation approaches faith formation primarily as a process. The initiation process has conversion of heart as its agenda, community as its context, and discipleship as its ultimate goal. All people, whether young or old, are at different stages of their faith journey.

Youth today are confronted with enormous societal pressures. In the areas of sexual morality, drug and alcohol abuse, purpose/meaning and identity youth are often encouraged to respond to these challenges and dilemmas in secular, unhealthy and unchristian ways. As Church, we must respond to these challenges by offering opportunities which provide and nourish faith experiences at the most human level. If the church cannot provide answers which connect with, and touch the lives of youth they will look for solutions and support elsewhere.

The challenges to engaging young people and their faith are daunting. Youth Ministry Professor, Kenda Kreasy Dean, calls the religion of American young adults "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)" which research reveals is also the religion of many of their parents. MTD says that there is a God but God is distant and has little to do with everyday life; God wants you to be a good person; and God wants you to be happy. It is more an expression of a health and wellness deity than the God of Jesus Christ.

Youth growing up in this post-modern world give the greatest authority to their own experience; tend not to find God in a fixed place and at a certain time (like Sunday service at 9:15am) but at any place and at any time; and lastly, do not want to be preached at but want "hands-on" experience doing-for-others. They are keenly aware of hypocrisy and presume it among religion and religious persons.

Accordingly, the philosophy behind St. John's Confirmation and Faith Formation Program is that God speaks to us in many ways. The presence of God in our lives can be seen and felt in a variety of experiences: pain and joy, defeat and victory, solitude and community. The formation process recognizes and utilizes these varied experiences to provide a richer, fuller faith context with which to draw from, and grow in, the awareness of God in young people's lives.

At the heart of the program is the goal of replacing the dominant images and values of secular society (sexual promiscuity, moral relativism, violence, individualism, oppression, and material wealth) with the dominant images of the **Kingdom of God** (equality, mercy, forgiveness, justice, unconditional love, centrality of God).

With this goal in mind the program is designed to help youth recognize God's loving presence working in and through human beings by providing affirming and nourishing faith experiences in four different areas: 1) Communal/social, 2) Liturgical/Prayer, 3) Educational, and 4) Service. These are the four areas that formed the core experiences of the early Christian community.

The Four Areas of Church Community

Communal/Social (Koinonia)- *This area refers to small faith-sharing groups which come together to listen, offer faith stories and pray in a supportive and affirming environment. In this atmosphere, youth are encouraged to share faith experiences in a place where all welcome to use the various gifts that individual youth have to contribute to the community. Again, if youth do not find community within the church they will seek it out in other ways.*

Socially, there will be activity nights which are opportunities to come together and have fun, celebrate, and share each other's joy.

Educational (Kerygma) – *Spreading the good news of Jesus as expressed in the Episcopal Church is central to forming disciples. It is the mission of the People of God to pass on our values and tradition to our youth. This mission will be carried out during twice monthly Sunday morning faith-sharing sessions that will engage both theological topics and the application of those topics to the problems faced by youth in their daily lives.*

Liturgical/Prayer (Leiturgia) –*In all social, service, and faith-sharing nights prayer always plays a central role. All weekend activities will include Eucharist. In addition, there will be diocesan retreats which are designed to enliven the spiritual life of the youth.*

Service (Diakonia) – *It is imperative in a process of faith formation that youth are provided with opportunities to put their faith into action. These opportunities may include visiting senior parishioners, food collection for St. Mary's and CityTeam, and service trips encountering persons whose social, economic and educational backgrounds are far different than our own.*

Parent and Guardian Role

The parent/guardian is the primary vehicle by which youth receive their values and traditions.

The first experience of faith in the lives of youth is in the home. An open, honest family that is able to talk about, and continue to grow in, their faith provides the richest context from which faith experiences can arise. **Your commitment to developing and sharing your children's faith journey is vital!** Every first Sunday there will be a leadership meeting with those, including youth already confirmed, who have agreed to commit themselves to participating in the program as peer and adult mentors all year long. Additionally, we need parental/guardian involvement as drivers to retreats and diocesan events, chaperones during social and service activities and making snacks for activity nights. These are just some of the ways in which parents can get involved and share their talents, gifts and most importantly, their presence as role models for the youth.

CONFIRMATION CALENDAR 2011-2012

September

- 4
- 11 Rally Day—Sign-ups
- 25 Faith Sharing Session #1 (Intro-Search for Meaning)

October

- 2 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing
- 8 Acolyte Festival Washington DC
- 9 Faith Sharing Session #2 (Search for God-Faith)
- 15-16 Bishop's Bash (Greater Plymouth Meeting Community Center)**
- 23 Faith Sharing Session #3 (Religions of the World)
- 30 Visit to Temple/Mosque/Service Trip

November

- 4-5 Diocesan Convention Overnight for Youth (St James School and Philadelphia Cathedral)**
- 6 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing
- 13 Faith Sharing Session #4 (The God of the Hebrews-Abraham/Isaac/Jacob/)
- 20 Visit to Synagogue/Service Trip
- 27 Faith Sharing Session #5 (Moses and Liberation)

December

- 2-3 Nightwatch (Philadelphia Cathedral-Senior High)**
- 4 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing
- 9-10 Nightwatch (St. Peter's in the Great Valley-Junior High)**
- 11 Faith Sharing Session #6 (Israel waiting for a messiah)
- 18
- 25

January

- 1 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing
- 8 Faith Sharing Session #7 (Jesus as messiah)
- 14 Service Trip
- 15
- 22 **BISHOP MICHEL'S VISIT AND BLESSING OF GROUP**
- 20-22 Senior High Retreat (North Bay Adventure, North East, MD)**
- 22 Faith Sharing Session #8 (Salvation and life)
- 29

February

- 5 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing
- 10-11 Nightwatch (Absalom Jones-Philadelphia Cathedral)**
- 12 Faith Sharing Session #9 (Jesus and the parables)
- 19

26 Faith Sharing Session #10 (Kingdom of Heaven and life)

March

2-4 Junior High Retreat (North Bay Adventure, Northeast, MD)

11 Faith Sharing Session #11 (Jesus' Miracles)

18 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing

25 Faith Sharing Session #12 (Preparation for Holy Week)

April

1 PALM SUNDAY

5-6 Youth Holy Week Activities

8 EASTER SUNDAY

15 Faith Sharing Session #13 (Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' Death)

21 Seeking Servants (Diocesan Service Day-Variou Sites)

22 Faith Sharing Session #14 (Sermon and life)

29

May

6 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing

13 Faith Sharing Session #15 (Jesus' resurrection)

20

27 Faith Sharing Session #16 (Living as a Resurrected People)

June

3 Leadership Meeting/Faith Sharing

10 Faith Sharing Session #17 (Preparation for City Camp)

17 Service Trip

24-29 City Camp

July

1-5 City Camp

8-13 City Camp

15

Program begins again in Sept 2012 leading to Confirmation

Sept.

Faith-sharing session #18 (Church as the sacrament of God)

Faith-sharing session #19 (Sacraments)

Oct.

Faith-Sharing Session #20 (Baptism)

Faith-Sharing Session #21 (Eucharist)

Faith-Sharing Session#22 (Confirmation)

Nov.

CONFIRMATION at the PHILADELPHIA CATHEDRAL

St. John's Youth Group Begins