

Small Parish Forum in Canton, Ohio: July 14-16 2016
“The 8-Person Sunday School & 4-Person Youth Group”

Handout on Youth Ministry

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Basic Principles of Youth Ministry Translatable to Every Parish

- Youth Ministry Provides teens a secure and safe place to ask questions, develop relationships, and explore their Orthodox Christian Faith.
- Youth Ministry, at its best, helps usher Orthodox Youth organically into Christian Adulthood as full members of our Parish family.
- Youth Ministry is interwoven into the fabric of the Parish Community!
 - Spiritually and Liturgically (It’s YOUR Church; It’s YOUR Faith)
 - Practically (Serving, Singing, Cleaning, Helping)
- Youth Group is Not a Substitute for Life in Christ
- Youth Group is a *function* of a broader Life in Christ in the Church

Special Features of the St. Athanasius Youth Ministry For Broader Consideration

- Serious Screening Policy through parish-wide “Child Safety Policy”
 - <http://athanasiusoca.org/images/wp-up/2016/07/Child-Safety-Policy-Handbook-Application.pdf>
- Team-approach to leadership and mentorship; 3 adults present always
- Prayer to begin each gathering; extended prayers (sung) to end gatherings
- Youth Group meets twice a month Sunday night
- Youth Group generally follows a clear calendar from September to May;
 - special events in summer on an ad hoc basis
- Youth Group meets generally in the parish hall, but occasionally will meet in homes or other venues
- Girls’ Small Group Meets on “off weeks”
- Strong emphasis on communication with parents
- Food and drink of some sort present at virtually all functions
 - This offers a chance not only to bond over food, but to offer a light reminder about the fasting/ feasting cycles of our Orthodox Church

Program/Event Ideas Used by St. Athanasius Youth Ministry

- Ropes Course Team-Building Retreat (each September)
 - “Theotokos Birthday Party” as extension of the Nativity of the Theotokos Feast, which begins the ecclesiastical year.
- Pool Party (always fun!) as a casual event
- Consistent Visits to Aged Home (separate visits in early fall, Halloween-receiving candy, Christmas-caroling, before Lent, after Pascha)
- Volunteer Visits to Food Pantry-Soup Kitchen; Bread Give-away [repeat]
- Movie and Pizza (quality films, e.g. *The Mission* or *Up* or the *Passion of Christ* followed by discussion) [repeat]
- Informal Game Night [repeat]
- Structured Game Night [repeat]
- Inter-generational Game Night (youth and older people) [repeat]
- Orthodox/Bible Trivia Night (Competition with Prizes) [repeat]
- Houseblessing Night (hosted by a family) [annual in January]
- Priest-on-the-Hotseat Night (Questions about *Everything* utilizing notecard “anonymous” system) [repeat]
- Babysitting Service Project for Young Families/Fundraiser for Summer Camp [a couple times a year]
- Meatfare “Formal” Banquet for Youth Group [annual]
- “Field Trip” Visit to Orthodoxy Sunday Vespers/ Youth Table [annual]
- Annual Overnight Monastery Visit (Spring Break During Lent) [annual]
- Educational/Catechetical Visits to synagogue or other church [repeat]
- Craft Night (e.g., Pumpkin carving in fall) [repeat]
- End-of-Year Hike (with Swimming and Pizza) [annual]
- Pentecost “Tongues of Fire” Chili Cookoff Fundraiser for Camp [annual]

Vacation Church School (for Middle-Schoolers)
Summer Camp (for Middle- and High Schooler)