



CORE TEAM

HANDBOOK



Core Team Members,

Welcome to our Youth Ministry team and for saying YES to this worthy mission.

Here at St. Anthony's, we see the value in the hearts and souls of young people. Young people today are bombarded with information and competing voices for their attention. We know that a personal relationship with Jesus is the only way to bring healing in a world that is broken. Our work in providing a safe and formative environment is important and needed.

You are reading this because you have been called and chosen to serve the youth of our parish. This is no easy task, but our Youth Ministry staff is here to support, teach and guide you in your journey as a Core Team Member.

Middle schoolers and high schoolers are at a time 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 in our ministry this year, this Core Team Handbook will show you some of the ways you can begin making a lasting impact in the lives and faith of the youth of our parish.

Thanks for being willing to serve. Thanks for caring about teenagers. And thanks for letting God use you. Your investment in each teen is an investment in the Church because we believe that they *are* the Church.

Let's begin our journey together!

- Youth Ministry Staff



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THE BASICS

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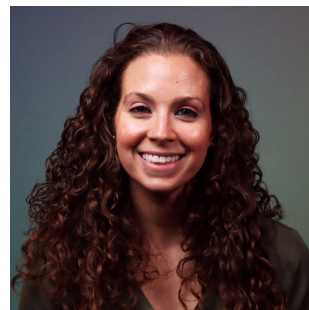
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OUR MINISTRIES

5TH - 6TH GRADE

ANCHOR | MONDAY FROM 5:30PM TO 6:45PM

Jesus Christ is the *anchor* for our hope! (Hebrews 6:19). Anchor is our youth ministry program for 5th-6th graders that seeks to offer solid biblical and spiritual formation. This is an introduction to large group/small group dynamics.



7TH - 8TH GRADE

EDGE | SUNDAY FROM 4:00PM TO 5:30PM

EDGE is our youth ministry program for 7th-8th graders and is all about learning how to know and love Christ and His Church. They will meet as a large group and split into small groups for discussion.

HIGH SCHOOL

CONFIRMATION YEAR ONE | TUESDAY FROM 7:00PM TO 8:30PM

During these sessions 9th-11th grade teens, who have not received the sacrament of Confirmation, are invited to join us for their 1st year of Confirmation Preparation. The Archdiocese asks that we have a prerequisite year for teens that are preparing for Confirmation. They will meet as a large group and split into small groups for discussion.

CONFIRMATION YEAR TWO | WEDNESDAY FROM 7:00PM TO 8:30PM

Confirmation Year 2 is the next step in high school ministry. Teens are brought further into their journey of knowing the love of Jesus while preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation in small classroom settings. This is the year they receive their Sacrament of Confirmation in the spring.

LIFE TEEN YOUTH GROUP | SUNDAY 7:30PM TO 8:45PM

Every 9th-12th grader is invited to register for our youth group on Sunday. Confirmation Year 1 & 2 teens are automatically enrolled when they sign up for Confirmation. Teens continue to grow in their knowledge of the faith, Christian community, personal prayer, and their participation in the Sacramental life of the Church.



OUR VISION

"THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES AND TO THE COMMUNAL LIFE, TO THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND TO THE PRAYERS" - ACTS 2:42

This verse will direct all of our ministry decisions at St. Anthony of Padua. The mission of the early church is the same as our mission today. The only difference is the means of communication and the resources we use are different. The message and purpose of the church are the same!

Our vision is to... **HELP TEENS *BELONG* TO THE CHURCH, BELIEVE IN JESUS, AND SEND THEM FORTH TO *BLESS* OTHERS.**

BELONG

We BELONG to a universal church and we want our teens to know that they ultimately BELONG to our loving God. The purpose of life is union with God and the Church exists to bring about the salvation of souls through the sacraments.

BELIEVE

The teachings of the church are deep, rich and meaningful even today. The basic message of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ is our Savior and died for our sins and calls us to repentance and to BELIEVE.

BLESS

Our lives become a blessing for others when we know who we are and what our purpose is. God's blessings overflow into every interaction if we allow him to BLESS us first. The sacraments BLESS us and set us apart to do God's will.



THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP

Relationships are the foundation of good youth ministry. We build relationships with our St. Anthony youth to encourage them towards a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything we do, say and teach should flow from the relationship we have with our Lord and Savior.

EARN THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD

Listen more than you speak! Your role is to listen and be ready to speak the truth of the Gospel into that teens life when they trust you enough to open up. It may seem like they are closed off and guarded, but do not lose hope or patience. Earn their trust by listening and seeking to understand.

BE A WITNESS

"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15-16). The way you interact with other Core Team members, parents and teens will be an important example of Christian friendship for the teens. Lead with mercy always when a difficult situation or topic arises and when the time comes to share the reason for your hope, be ready.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

We are not professional counselors. We should always acknowledge the limits of our own competence and willingly make referrals to other professionals whose work is in line with the moral and ethical beliefs of the Catholic Church.

We are not the teen's parent or guardian. In all conversations with teens, we uphold the word of the parent and encourage the teens to respect and honor them. The only time a parent's word should be contradicted is in the case of abuse or a threat to the teen.

We are not Jesus. We should not get discouraged if a teen doesn't come back to their small group, does not show interest, etc. We should pray for these teens, invite them back, and remember that we are not the Savior – Christ is, and He always has a plan for each one of us.



FORMING DISCIPLES

The Great Commission commands us to, “**Go and make disciples.**” Youth Ministry exists to accompany youth in their most formative years and our goal is to make life-long disciples.

Discipleship requires discipline and it is no easy task. We are teaching the art of following Christ and there are many ways to accomplish this task.

DISCIPLESHIP FRAMEWORK: *TEACH, SHOW, TRY, DO*

TEACH: Our teaching will give them the focus for their actions. The truths of the Catholic Church are beautiful and we will do our best to transmit these truths in our teaching.

SHOW: Just telling a teen facts will not be enough. We must show them with our own stories, biblical examples, stories of the saints, beautiful artwork, music and more. Examples and analogies are a great teaching tool and can lead teens to understand essential truths easier.

TRY: Our goal in forming disciples is to get them to Heaven. So in order to get them there we need to invite them to start living the faith *at all times*. They need to be able to try new things without being judged and to be able to practice prayer, worship, and sharing their own testimony.

DO: Once a habit is formed, they will desire to do God's will with ease and joy!

DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

The Christian life **happens best in a community of people**. That’s why we focus so much energy on getting students plugged into consistent small groups, why we emphasize that parents are the primary catechists of their children, and why we surround our teens with others who know and love Jesus Christ - people just like you. Because discipleship takes all of us!



EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

"Evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. At its essence is the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, both of these are works of the Spirit of God. Evangelization must always be directly connected to the Lord Jesus Christ....There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed." (Go and Make Disciples, #10-11)

"Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize..." (St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #14)

"Catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating hearers into the fullness of Christian life." (St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, #18)

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity." (St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, #5)

"Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #4)

"Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." (Pope Benedict, *Deus Caritas Est*, #1)

"I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples." (St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* #3)



COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH

Naturally, every relationship requires communication to thrive. Below are the policies, procedures and expectations of St. Anthony Youth Ministry for both Youth Ministry Staff and Core Members that will allow each adult to appropriately and confidently communicate with teens:

TRANSPARENCY

In all cases, communication must be transparent. Parents must be fully aware of all mediums being used to keep in contact with their children for ministerial purposes. **Always consult with the Youth Ministry staff before communicating with teens outside of youth group meetings.** While we build relationships of trust with the teens and respect confidentiality (see below), Youth Ministry Staff and Core Members should:

- Always relay to parents how and why they are contacting their teens. Parents should be aware of any group messages before they are created and should consent to their teen's use of the group's communication.
- Always communicate with teens in a manner that they would be comfortable sharing with the Youth Ministry Staff, Core Members, and the teen's parents.

COMMUNICATION & CONVERSATIONS (IN PERSON)

Personal, face-to-face interaction has no replacement in relationship-building. During youth ministry meetings, please make a point to speak to teens before, during and after events. These small interactions will create a welcoming atmosphere for teens that are hesitant and nervous to open up. Try not to just talk to other Core Team members during meetings, make an intentional effort to have conversations with teens!



FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTIONS

NEVER BE ALONE WITH A MINOR

There should never be a time when you need to meet alone with a minor before, during or after our scheduled time of Youth Ministry. The Youth Ministry staff will always offer support if a difficult conversation needs to occur. For your safety and that of the teens, please communicate with the Youth Ministry staff if you are ever in a situation that calls for assistance.

RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

In cases of confidentiality issues, inform the young person at the beginning of the dialogue or small group that confidentiality will be kept, unless the youth is threatening to harm himself/herself or others or there is a legal duty to disclose information that is shared. In times when parental involvement is needed, share with the young person that you will continue to be of support throughout the entire process. (For example say: "I just want to let you know before you share, that I'm listening and that I have to get help for you if it is a situation that could harm you or others. I want you to know that before we continue our conversation.")

BE AUTHENTIC

Show them your humanity, while maintaining a healthy boundary. We do not ask you to be perfect or 'put on a show' for the teens. Teens respect honesty and consistency. Share who you are with them, but never make small groups a place for you to unload your burdens and problems onto the teens. Be prudent in the information you share and always remind the teens that you are also on your faith journey just like them. Remember, listen more than you speak!



GROUP MESSAGING & EMAIL

FLOCKNOTE

This is the primary way the church will communicate with parents. We have separate groups for Youth Ministry Parents and Core Team.

GROUPME MESSAGING

Group Messaging is a one way we will communicate with parents and older teens. We will only use GroupMe for trips, Core Team Planning, Teen Leader Planning, Confirmation Year 2 Classes and these need to be started by Youth Ministry Staff.

GROUPME: This is an app that can be downloaded onto your phone and used to group message. Like any online messaging, do not direct message with youth and always communicate with your Youth Ministry Staff if you need assistance with how to handle situation with minors. We prefer NOT to use GroupMe to communicate, because the platforms lend themselves to unsafe communication when misused.

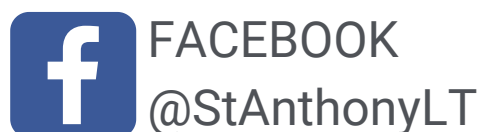
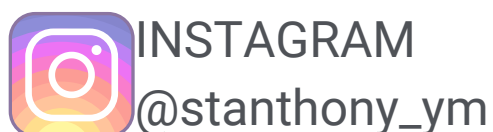
EMAIL

Email is an effective way to communicate with our Ministry Staff. If you want to communicate with a parent of a minor, please reach out to the Youth Ministry Staff. In using this medium, Youth Ministry Staff and Core Members should communicate to parents the ways they plan on communicating with their teens, how this communication will take place, and why the communication is necessary.



SOCIAL MEDIA & PHONE

YOUTH MINISTRY APPROVED SOCIAL MEDIA



Follow our Instagram and Facebook pages! Only use these mediums of social media to connect with our teens. Do not use personal social media platforms to communicate with teens.

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Your online presence needs to reflect the Catholic faith and should not directly oppose the Catholic Church's teachings. Accounts should not have things on them that do not uphold the moral precepts of the Church. This includes, and is not limited to, language, photos, songs, videos, bulletins, blogs, podcasts, and applications.

DO NOT 'FOLLOW' OR BE 'FOLLOWED' BY TEENS

In today's culture, we recommend that you do not follow or be followed by teens on your personal accounts. We have a St. Anthony's Instagram and Facebook page. You may use the comment sections to share in the public eye.

Always communicate in public to protect yourself and the teens you serve.

PHONE CONVERSATIONS

We do not recommend calling teens. Always alert the Youth Ministry staff if you need to communicate with a teen in particular. Parents are the primary form of communication and the Youth Ministers will happily call parents for you!



CORE TEAM BEHAVIORAL POLICY

Recognize that the inevitable inequality of power in relational ministry demands clearly established and appropriate boundaries. The burden of responsibility always falls on the adult Youth Ministry Staff and Core Members to respect and maintain the boundaries.

PROCEDURES FOR PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Discretion must be used in dealing with all adolescents, especially regarding physical contact. The safety of our teens is our top priority and physical boundaries are to be strictly respected. **Report suspicious behavior to the Youth Ministry staff even if you aren't sure if it is worthy of reporting that day or immediately after you have witnessed something. Please do not wait to report.** Be alert and aware of your surroundings and keep our young people safe.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR POLICIES

Sexual gestures or overtures an adolescent makes towards an adult or vice-versa should be reported to the Youth Ministry Staff immediately. Do not be alone with a teen in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.

Being alone with a minor in a room/vehicle must be avoided at all times.



CORE TEAM BEHAVIORAL POLICIES (CONT.)

DO NOT:

- Do not take an overnight trip alone with a teen who is not a member of your immediate family.
- Do not engage in the physical discipline of a minor. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with your supervisor and/or the parents of the minor.
- Do not take photographs of minors while they are unclothed or dressing (e.g., in a locker room or bathing facility).

INAPPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTS AND EXPERIENCES

It is never appropriate to manipulate either an experience or the environment in order to obtain a specific response. Spiritual and emotional manipulation are also inappropriate, and it is essential to assure young people that whatever emotions they experience at any given time during an event are valid and have no moral overtones or consequences.

SET THE TONE

This is an explicit list of actions that are forbidden by adults which refers back to the Code of Ethics for Leaders and Volunteers in the Archdiocesan Youth Ministry Handbook:

- Drinking alcohol in front of youth.
- Being around teens that are drinking.
- Encouraging teens to drink alcohol or ignore the law.
- Buying alcohol or tobacco for teens.
- Dating or having an exclusive relationship with any of the youth.
- Verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior.
- Gossiping about others—especially the teens or other adult leaders & clergy.
- Inappropriate sexual jokes, comments, or touching.
- Sharing of your personal experiences with regard to your social life (especially sexuality, dating, partying, etc.) Over-sharing is never okay in youth ministry.
- Swearing or other inappropriate terms/language.
- Inappropriate touching and physical contact.



SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

CREATING GREAT SMALL GROUPS

BE PRESENT AND AVAILABLE

BE PREDICTABLE: You can't build community without trust; in order to trust they have to know you're going to show up. Every youth needs someone who knows their name and what's happening in their life.

PAY ATTENTION: This is more than just being physically present, it requires preparation, energy, and engagement. Listening is the biggest part - being prepared to connect with youth.

MAKE AN EFFORT: Get to know your teens through conversations inside and outside of designated small group time. The beginning and end of youth group are great times to have casual and simple conversations that can make a big difference.

CREATE A SAFE PLACE

GUARD THEIR HEARTS: You've heard "what is said in small group stays in small group" but remind the teens **AT THE BEGINNING** that information shared that indicates harm done to themselves or others has to be reported to the Youth Minister(s).

BE A FACILITATOR: Facilitators do not talk the whole time, they ask open ended questions to encourage the teens to talk more. Lead them to value and experience acceptance, confidentiality and honesty. Don't assume they know how to be in a small group, lead them!

BE PATIENT: There is no checklist for developing an authentic faith life in your teens. It is a life-long process we are playing a small role in, and it is different for every teen.

PARTNER WITH PARENTS

INTRODUCE YOURSELF: The Youth Ministers will help connect you to parents if needed and will be letting them know topics of discussion so they are aware of what we are talking about.

HONOR THE PARENT: For the most part, every parent wants what is best for their children. Let the parents know you are there to support the parent's role and the growth of their child.

REINFORCE THE FAMILY Always promote time with family. Keep the importance of teen's connection with their family, especially their parents or guardians, at the forefront of your mind and include this in small group experiences.



MAKE IT PERSONAL, BUT DO NOT OVER-SHARE

If we want our teens to live a Christian life, they have to see it in our lives first. Share your stories of faith, share the way you encounter Christ and share your heart, without giving private and secret details. There is always a balance of personal story telling and safe boundaries you have to navigate as a leader. Always err on the side of not sharing too much private, sensitive information. Think of how your baggage and hurt can affect our teens. Do not use this as a time for your own small group sharing, give THEM space to share.

MAKE FAITH YOUR PRIORITY: Your spiritual life needs to be number one and the teens need to see that. They will follow your example, so make the Lord a priority in your life. You can't disciple if you aren't being disciplined. You can't encourage them to read scripture if your Bible hasn't been opened in months. You can't teach them to pray if you don't pray. *You are expected to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation monthly and attend the Holy Mass every Sunday. The Sacred Liturgy cannot be replaced by personal prayer or another Christian service.*

BE AUTHENTIC: Teens don't need another peer, they need a leader. Leading isn't about being cool or relatable- it's about being a disciple and sharing that part of your life above the rest. Do not put on a show for the teens; be yourself and they will respect you for it.

ENCOURAGE GROWTH

GROWTH IN FRIENDSHIPS: Encourage good relationships with other disciples and holy adults in their lives- don't let yourself be the only one. At some point they will move onto different leaders and our job is to connect them to the wider community of faith!

GROWTH IN FAITH: Teach them to pray and to seek the Mass, the Sacraments and to live like a saint. Teens need to know how our faith is lived-out beyond high school for the rest of their lives. Share with them your testimony and love for Jesus Christ and His Church. Encourage them to share their faith with others outside our community as well.

GROWTH IN VIRTUE: No matter what grade your teens are in, they will transition to a new stage of life. Virtue and good habits will help ease growing pains, lessen anxiety and keep them rooted in their relationship with Christ. Don't be afraid to call teens out in a charitable way if it helps them grow in virtue.



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Leading meaningful discussion with teenagers is a big part of any Youth Ministry experience. Whether at Life Night small group or during a retreat or conference, make the most of the time you have with our teens. Below are ten tips that may help you better facilitate your small group:

1. HAVE A PLAN, AND BE READY TO CHANGE IT.

If great discussion and interest flow from your introduction question, do not force the group to move on to the next question just for the sake of the agenda. Go with the youth and dig deeper into the areas with which they connect. That's what processing is all about.

2. GIVE STUDENTS PERMISSION TO TALK.

Emphasize that this is a safe place to share. Students don't have to share their deepest things with the entire group but encourage them to talk with someone with whom they feel safe.

3. ALLOW TIME TO ANSWER.

Our tendency is to answer the questions we ask and a few moments of silence can seem like an eternity. Fear not! A good practice is to ask a question and then mentally count to five. It will seem awkward at first, but it will allow for people to think and answer when they are ready.

4. REPHRASE A QUESTION EFFECTIVELY.

If you wait several seconds and it seems no one understands the question, then you can rephrase it, but do so carefully. Keep the question open-ended. Do not answer it or change it to a "yes or no" question. Questions with one-word answers do not promote processing.

For example, If the question is, "After what you heard today, how do you feel?"

- Do not rephrase it to "Do you feel sad about what you heard?"
- Instead, rephrase it to "What do you think about what you heard today?" (This helps students transfer abstract feelings to concrete thoughts and this method keeps open a wide range of possible answers.)



5. REDIRECT WHEN NECESSARY.

If a question is asked again or rephrased and no one has a response, it's fine to move on from that question. Redirecting a question may also be necessary if someone is on a tangent and the focus of the discussion is lost. Keep the conversation moving by thanking them for their thoughts, but re-focus on the question at hand.

6. LISTEN.

You can only know someone's heart by giving full attention to them while they are speaking. Do not plan your next question or your next announcement while students are sharing. Let your students' responses shape the movement of the discussion. Be a good and compassionate listener. Use eye-contact to show you're listening and ready yourself to care for students who express hurt, uncertainty, or strong emotion related to their own journey.

7. DON'T FORCE CONCLUSIONS OR ANSWERS.

There is a time to teach and a time to listen. Before you or your fellow leaders jump in with the right answer, let students grapple with hard questions on their own. Injecting your answers into discussion will silence productive conversation.

8. SHOW RESPECT.

Set boundaries in conversations. Some people in your small group might talk over one another, so it's a good idea to have something represent which person has time to speak and be heard. For example, a ball or keys could be passed around as people share their thoughts.

9. DIG DEEPER WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

Listen for underlying beliefs/opinions/feelings and help bring them out. Give permission for questions to be discussed. Help students go deeper by asking, "What are some reasons for that?" or "Can you explain why you feel that way?" Repeat answers. Turn conversation towards others: "Did anyone else notice this? What do you think about it?"

10. FOLLOW-UP WITH YOUR TEENS.

After the discussion is over, don't miss the opportunity to follow-up with students about what they said. Ask a student if he still has questions. Invite further conversation. Tell a student that you appreciated what he or she said. Small group discussion can lead to incredible one-on-one conversations.



BELONG
HERE



BELIEVE
IN JESUS



BLESS
OTHERS