



YOUTH MINISTRY HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

Welcome + Grounding Scriptures	2
Staff and Youth Volunteers	3
Youth Group Rhythms	4
Sunday Morning	4
Retreats and Trips	5
Payments and Scholarships	6
Youth Music	7
Communication	7
Covenant/Expectations	8
Youth Information Form	9
Parent Involvement	10
Calendar for the Year	11
Faith Milestones	13
Confirmation	13
Youth Sunday	13
More Information about Meals	14
Reimbursement Form	15

Please note: This document is updated with some regularity to reflect new youth advisors, changing retreat dates, and sign-ups year to year. Our latest version can be found by scanning the QR code below for a digital copy:



Welcome

Welcome to the Kirk Youth Ministry! At the Kirk of Kildaire, we take seriously our promise to help young people learn about the God who loves them and the community that cares for them. We believe that young people deserve places where they can be confident to ask difficult questions and explore new aspects of faith and life in one of the most challenging times of transition a person can experience. In their wonderings and growth, we hope to support them with the grace that God offers to each one of us, trusting that in a community of grace people are free to become who God is calling them to be.

Our mission: Guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, we support youth as they openly share the joys and struggles of their lives and encourage them as they wrestle with and grow in their faith, making it their own and providing a safe place for youth to celebrate the gifts God has given them and encouraging them to embark on a path of service and leadership with the Kirk and the broader community.

Our vision: Equipping disciples to be confidently grounded in God's presence and love.

Grounding Scriptures

Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.

— Ephesians 4:32

Youth Theme 2026-27: Forgive each other as God forgave you

I give thanks to you that I was marvelously set apart.

Your works are wonderful—I know that very well.

— Psalm 139:14

Youth Theme 2025-26: I am wonderfully made

So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household. As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

— Ephesians 2:19-22

Youth Theme 2024-25: You belong here.

Staff



Matt Cooper, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

mcooper@kirkofkildaire.org

Matt has served as the Youth and Young Adults Director since May 2023. He is originally from Austin, Texas, where he graduated from the University of Texas before spending several years working in college ministry. Matt moved to the Triangle in August 2020 to attend Duke Divinity School. During his time in seminary, he explored work in churches, non-profits, retreat centers, and more.

He married Alli Buikema Cooper in October 2023, and the two have a son, Ezra. In his free time, Matt likes to hike, explore new places, and read!

Youth Advisors

Middlers

Kim Allen
Alex East
John East
Tracy Llewellyn

Sr. Highs

Jonathan Allen
John Aman
Rhoda Chang
Brandon Harris
Laurel Nicosia

Flex

Kate Frohman

Elders

Rhoda Chang (Formation Elder)
Eloise S. (Youth Elder)

Youth Group Rhythms

Weekly Meeting

Schedule: Sunday Nights, September 13 – May 23

3:50-4:35p	Hope Ringers (youth bells, for involved students)
4:35-5:15p	Dolce Voce (youth choir, for involved students)
5:15-5:45p	Dinner for all
5:45-7:15p	Youth Group (split into middle & high school)

Youth Group Structure

Youth group is arranged according to a three-part rhythm: **Formation**, **Recreation**, and **Service**. Each week, our youth group activity focuses on one of these rhythms, all of which are crucial for our Christian life and growth in community!

- In **Formation**, we study together a topic related to our youth group theme. Using Scripture, stories of people in the church, and creative activities, we explore theological concepts and life lessons.
- In **Recreation**, we have fun together! Fun is a crucial part of building strong and trusting communities, which are central to our lives and provides places of belonging and growth.
- In **Service**, we explore ways in which God is calling each of us individually and as groups to work for the good of others. We take on a service project together and live out a missional life.

Every week also gives us opportunities to connect with one another through intentional conversations and shared experiences.

Sunday Mornings

We encourage all youth and their families to be an active part of the worship life at the Kirk of Kildaire. We worship at 10:30am each Sunday!

The Sunday School hour prior to the service (9:15 - 10:15) is an ever-evolving model for our youth. This year, we are hosting a Sunday School class for our middle school aged youth. This class follows a two-year rhythm, studying the Bible in depth one year and studying some basic theological principles the other year, to prepare our youth for confirmation. This year is our theology year!

High schoolers are welcome to find places to serve leading our middle school youth or working with our children's Sunday school classes. We're always looking for new

ways of forming our high schoolers with topics they're interested in, so feel free to express things you'd like to study!

Retreats and Trips

Another crucial part of our youth group experience are retreats, when we take intentional time away from our regular lives, often by traveling somewhere! By changing our normal life rhythms, we can learn new things about ourselves and about God.

Generally, our retreats follow this yearly rhythm:

Time of Year	Retreat Name	Who is Eligible
Late Summer	Kickoff Lock in	All Youth
Fall	Confirmation Retreat	Confirmands (8 th grade)
Spring	Presbytery Youth Retreat	All Youth (Focus on middlers)
Summer	Massanetta Springs	Middlers
Summer	Montreat Youth	High Schoolers
Summer	Middle School Service	Middlers
Summer	High School Service	High Schoolers

In addition to these regular overnight trips, twice a semester we have what we call "Nights Out," one for middlers and one for high schoolers. These are opportunities for our students to get away from their regular rhythms (including those of youth group) and just hang out for a while!

These retreats and trips form an integral part of how our youth are being formed in their faith, and we encourage all youth to attend at least one of each kind of retreat during their time in youth group! More information about each trip can be found below.

Kickoff Lock-in

To start off the year with fun and friendship, we spend a night locked in the Kirk of Kildaire! There's dinner, endless snacks, games, music, movies, and more to keep us going overnight. This is a great way to build our excitement for the beginning of the year. Join us this year on **August 28!**

Presbytery Youth Retreat

A two night retreat for youth all across our presbytery, at Roanoke Christian Camp in Washington, NC. This retreat is led by the Presbytery Youth Council, a group of high schoolers who plan and lead all of our activities! This trip is open to all, but especially middle schoolers. This spring, the retreat will be **March 5-7**.

Massanetta Springs Middle School Conference

This four day retreat happens each summer (usually in June) at the Massanetta Springs Conference Center in the mountains of Virginia! Our middle schoolers (including incoming 6th graders) go to worship and hear from a special speaker, join in fun and engaging small groups, and have plenty of free time for games. This is a great time to get away during the summer and learn about faith! **This year, we will be going from June 24-27, 2027. Registration is here:**

<https://kirk.breezechms.com/form/24ae04303352>

Montreat Youth Conference

This weeklong conference is for our high schoolers, up to Montreat Conference Center in the mountains of North Carolina outside Asheville! Joining hundreds of other high schoolers from churches all across the country, youth get to experience awesome keynotes and worship, play tons of games, explore the beautiful Montreat campus, and grow in their faith through small groups led by incredible leaders. **This year, we will be going from July 11-17, 2027. Registration is here:**

<https://kirk.breezechms.com/form/24ae04305>

Service Trips

Every summer, we try to offer service trips for both our middle school and high school groups. Often, these trips are CROSS missions in Charlotte for our middle schoolers, where we learn about different kinds of nonprofit ministry in large cities, and Appalachia Service Project for our high schoolers, where youth help build and repair houses to make homes in Appalachia warmer, safer, and drier. Trips change year by year, so keep your eyes open for what trips are available!

Payments and Scholarships

If the price of a trip or event ever poses a challenge, families are invited to reach out to Matt about scholarship or payment plan needs. All trips and events require a deposit or payment in full at the time of registration. Payment may be made online or via check/cash in the office. After the date indicated on the registration page, refunds may not be offered. We often have to pay well in advance of our trips for transportation, room, board, conference fees, etc. and cannot get that money back

past certain dates. (Occasionally, if a youth needs to cancel, we are able to fill that spot and issue a refund, however, that is not guaranteed.)

Adult chaperones for trips do not require payment, as they are doing us a service by joining!

Registrations

All registrations are managed through our church management software, Breeze, and specific links to registrations can be found in emails and previously in this packet. If you can't find one, please reach out to Matt.

Full payments (if not done at the time of registration on Breeze) can be made by visiting the Kirk website, clicking on "Give" at the top of the page, and selecting the appropriate trip from the drop down menu.

Youth Music

For youth interested in music, we have two groups that meet throughout the year before youth group: Hope Ringers and Dolce Voce.

Hope Ringers

The Hope Ringers are our youth handbell choir. No background skill is required (though it can help to know how to read music). This group meets from 3:50 - 4:35 Sunday evenings in the Sanctuary.

Dolce Voce

This is our youth vocal choir. Youth learn to sing in their ranges and rehearse together from 4:35 - 5:15 Sunday evenings in the Sanctuary.

Communication

During the school year, we communicate with families mainly through our weekly email newsletters. These come via our email platform. We subscribe everyone on our rolls when youth matriculate into 6th grade and we update these rolls on a yearly basis based on our registration forms. You may opt out of these emails at any time and sometimes you need to check your junk box for them. Please note that youth information may come either through the Kirk Krier, which covers all Kirk activities, or through the youth group specific email.

In an emergency, please text Matt. Otherwise, email is best.

Covenant / Expectations

Covenants are mutually agreed upon expectations that help ground and guide us in our life together. When youth register, we ask them to sign the following covenant. We also make covenants one of the first Sunday nights of Youth Group each September. We ask that the families of youth will support us by serving as volunteers, meal providers, and chaperones. Youth groups thrive when there are dedicated adults helping make things happen, and we're so grateful for all the support from our families!

I will:

- strive to serve God, pray, and worship regularly
- support and encourage other youth and adults
- participate wholeheartedly in activities
- arrive on time and not leave early unless I talk to an adult leader
- respect the decisions and guidance of those in leadership roles
- respect the feelings, opinions, and property of others
- dress in clothing that is comfortable, respectful, and allows me to take part in activities
- abide by deadlines, lights out, and special event rules
- abstain from the use of tobacco, alcohol, and use of illegal drugs
- refrain from any sexual behavior while at Kirk-sponsored events
- refrain from entering any sleeping area that is not my own
- refrain from driving other youth on Kirk-sponsored events without permission
- talk to an adult leader if I have a problem, need, or concern.

Kirk Youth Information

At the beginning of each year, we collect important information about each youth and their family. This includes contact info as well as medical, emergency, and insurance information. This data is stored securely at the Kirk and deleted at the beginning of each new school year.

It is imperative that we have a form for each youth, for them to participate in our activities! This year's form can be found here, or by scanning the QR code below:

<https://kirk.breezechms.com/form/5d1b44>.



Parent Involvement

There are several ways that parents of youth group aged kids can help us carry out our ministry here at the Kirk! Our ministry depends on help from dedicated volunteers.

Sunday Night Dinners

Our Sunday night programming (which is both Kirk Family Nights and Youth Group) provide meals for participants, and we rely on volunteer help from parents of children and youth (as well as the wider congregation) to make these dinners possible. Our full system is laid out further in this document on page 12, but each meal needs volunteers for cooking!

Chaperoning Trips

We think that retreats and trips are a crucial part of our ministry with young people. Retreats allow us to get away from our regular rhythms and see new aspects of our faith lives. Our trips follow a pattern each year so you can plan ahead. Our church child protection policy requires us to take one adult for every six youth on overnight trips; this means we need your participation! We ask that you chaperone at least one trip during your child's tenure in the Kirk Youth Ministry. (See the list of yearly trips in this book.) We understand that chaperoning for an entire week may not be possible for you or your family; we can typically pair parents up to chaperone half a trip and 'tag in/out' with another parent.

Volunteering on Sunday mornings / Sunday nights / Special Events

We are always in the market for new Sunday School teachers and youth advisors! We realize that each youth has a different response to having their parents as part of the youth ministry, and this option may not work for everyone. But parent involvement is crucial to helping our youth stay safe and grow well, as they come to know the adults in their lives that want to help them see how God walks alongside them!

Yearly Calendar Flow

You can expect our youth group calendar to flow in this pattern every year. We will always communicate changes to our normal schedule via email.

- **Mid August:** 6th grade night at the Kirk
- **August:** Back to School Lock in
- **Sunday after Labor Day:** First Youth Group
- **September-April:** Confirmation (8th graders)
- **Late April or Early May:** Youth Sunday and Confirmation Sunday
- **Sunday before Memorial Day:** Last Youth Group
- **First Sunday in June:** Graduation Sunday

For a complete calendar of the fall and the spring, please see below:

<i>Kirk Youth Ministry – Fall 2026 Calendar</i>		
<i>Date</i>	Rhythm	Activity
<i>September 13</i>	Recreation	First Youth Group Back!
<i>September 18</i>	Middle School Night Out	
<i>September 20</i>	Formation	What is Forgiveness?
<i>September 27</i>	Service	Service Project
<i>October 4</i>	Formation	Forgiveness from God
<i>October 9-11</i>	Youth Fall Retreat	
<i>October 11</i>	Service	Service Project
<i>October 18</i>	Formation	Forgiveness from God
<i>October 25</i>	Recreation	Trunk or Treat
<i>November 1</i>	Formation	Forgiving Others
<i>November 8</i>	Service	Service Project
<i>November 14</i>	High School Night Out	
<i>November 15</i>	Formation	Forgiving Others
<i>November 22</i>	Worship	Decorating the Kirk
<i>November 29</i>	Recreation	Games + Fun
<i>December 6</i>	Formation	Christmas Story & Forgiveness
<i>December 13</i>	Recreation	End of Year Celebration
<i>December 20 – Jan 3</i>	No YG – Winter Break	

<i>Kirk Youth Ministry – Spring 2027 Calendar</i>		
<i>Date</i>	Rhythm	Activity
<i>January 10</i>	Formation	Forgiving Yourself
<i>January 17</i>	Service	Service Project
<i>January 24</i>	Formation	Forgiving Yourself
<i>January 31</i>	Recreation	Fun & Games
<i>February 6</i>	High School Night Out	
<i>February 7</i>	Formation	Forgiving Others
<i>February 14</i>	No Youth Group – Super Bowl	
<i>February 21</i>	Formation	Forgiving Others
<i>February 28</i>	Recreation	Fun & Games
<i>March 5-7</i>	Presbytery Youth Retreat	
<i>March 7</i>	Service	Service Project
<i>March 14</i>	Formation	What about systems?
<i>March 21</i>	Recreation	Easter Egg Hunt
<i>March 28</i>	No Youth Group - Easter	
<i>April 4</i>	Formation	Forgiveness & The Church
<i>April 9</i>	Middle School Night Out	
<i>April 11</i>	Worship	Youth Sunday Prep
<i>April 18</i>	Worship	Youth Sunday Prep
<i>April 25</i>	Youth Sunday – No YG That Evening	
<i>May 2</i>	Service	Service Project
<i>May 9</i>	No Youth Group – Mother’s Day	
<i>May 16</i>	Recreation	Fun & Games
<i>May 23</i>	Recreation	End of Year Celebration

Faith Milestones

Confirmation

Confirmation is the time in a youth's life where youth are invited to dive deep into the specific teachings and beliefs of the church as they make a decision on whether to join as full members. When children are baptized, the church makes a promise to them, that they will teach that child about Jesus and God's love for them.

Confirmation is the church's fulfillment of that promise, as the youth makes a decision about whether to grasp this for themselves.

Our confirmation classes are generally for our 8th graders, although in some years other youth may be invited on a case-by-case basis. Youth study doctrines of the church, such as what we believe about God, the sacraments, and how the church is governed, before making a decision at the end of the process about whether to join the church.

This is a sacred journey, and we hold each youth's decision with the dignity it deserves. Not every youth will decide to join the church, and that is okay!

Confirmation is the process of figuring out what you believe at this point in time, as we are all always figuring out what we believe, and we honor each person's decision.

For the 2026-27 school year, confirmation will be shorter class in the spring. Parents will receive additional information as we get closer to the spring semester!

Youth Sunday

Youth Sunday is typically held at the end of April or beginning of May. In the weeks prior, youth write all the liturgy for the service, which they then lead on Youth Sunday. Our youth choir and handbells lead our music for the day, and graduating seniors preach. It's a wonderful opportunity for our larger church to see the impact that our formation efforts are having on our youth!

Graduation Sunday

Graduation Sunday is generally held the first Sunday of June, or the Sunday nearest to graduation dates. We invite our high school graduates to come in their robes and present them to the congregation, as well as recognize others in the congregation who are graduating from college or after.

More Information about Meals

All of our Sunday night programming (Kirk Family Nights and Youth Group) share the same meal and meal protocol. We have four cooking teams, each led by a team leader, and each team has typically four volunteers beside the leader. We generally plan to feed 100 people each week, and meals are simple to create in bulk (so spaghetti, tacos, etc.), often with salad on the side and some kind of easy dessert (such as cookies). To keep things simple, there is a specific meal assigned to each team. Ranch and Italian dressings are provided. We often have gluten-free and vegetarian students, and keep gluten-free chicken nuggets in the Kirk freezer to prepare as needed.

On occasion, the Kirk Youth Group meets apart from Kirk Family Nights, and the meal protocol changes to accommodate this change. Specific instructions will be sent to families serving on these nights.

Plates, silverware, cups, drink dispensers, and lemonade mix are all available in the pantry, and instructions for turning on the ovens can be found on the wall. We eat at 5:15 pm, so having food set up prior to this is key!

All costs are reimbursable through filling out the form attached below and sending it to Matt or Jenni for approval. We aim for a weekly budget of \$300, with staples and shelf-stable goods on hand. You can sign up to help by emailing Matt at mcooper@kirkofkildaire.org.

KIRK *CHECK REQUEST/VOUCHER*

Instructions:

- 1) Enter data: manually or on-line. To enter on-line, move cursor to each box, left click, type, and repeat for next box.
- 2) Print Check Request/Voucher and attach to invoice.
- 3) Place authorized Check Request/Voucher attachment in the mail box of Edie Graham.
Note: voucher must include an account number and supporting receipts.
- 4) Completed requests (with signatures) may be scanned and e-mailed to Edie (KirkPayables@kirkofkildaire.org) for expediency if you prefer.
- 5) Voucher requests received by 8:30am on Wednesday will be available on Thursday.

Date:

Pay to:

Routing instructions or address to mail to:

Amount of Check:

Purpose of Expenditure:

Comments or special instructions:

Account Number:

Requested by:

Authorized by

04/23