

# **St. Heather's Episcopal Church**

## **Example Youth Ministry Volunteer Leader Handbook**

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# Youth Ministries Overview

Welcome to St. Heather's Youth Ministries! We serve students in grades 5 through 12 and their families. Sunday mornings provide opportunities for spiritual growth and connection through engaging programs for all age groups. Beyond Sundays, we offer events and activities designed to help youth build deeper connections and live out their faith in everyday life.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

At St. Heather's Episcopal Church, we strive to cultivate an inclusive, Christ-centered community where young people are empowered to explore faith, build authentic relationships, and grow as compassionate leaders.

## OUR YOUTH MINISTRY VALUES:

- We partner with families to nurture tweens, teens, and young adults as they discover and deepen their faith in Christ.
- We believe youth ministry is a cornerstone of spiritual formation, providing experiences that shape lifelong discipleship.
- Our ministry is built on the foundations of Connection, Service, Worship, Spiritual Growth, Mentorship, and Joy.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH MINISTRY:

Navigating adolescence can be challenging, and youth ministry creates a safe, welcoming space where students can connect with peers and trusted mentors. Youth Ministry Volunteers are vital to our mission of making every young person feel seen, known, and loved. Through small group connections, special events, and weekly programs, volunteers are the heartbeat of our ministry, helping to foster a sense of belonging and spiritual growth in each student.

In this Youth Ministry Volunteer Handbook, you will find a wealth of information that will both make your work with our youth easier, as well as more effective in helping accomplish our mission: welcoming youth and families into Christ-centered relationships.

# Meet the Team

## DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY - TABITHA GRACE



**TABITHA GRACE**  
YOUTH MINISTER

Tabitha is a dynamic leader with over a decade of experience in youth ministry. She is passionate about creating spaces where young people can safely explore faith, ask tough questions, and develop a deeper understanding of Christ's love. Tabitha's approach to ministry is rooted in compassion, authenticity, and inclusivity. Outside of church, she enjoys hiking, painting, and hosting game nights with her family.

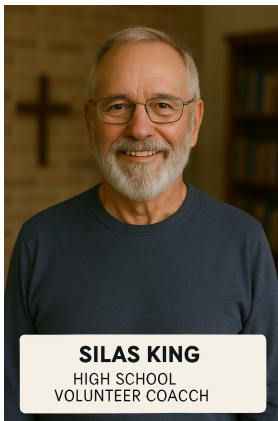
## MIDDLE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER COACH - MIRIAM JUSTICE

Miriam brings a passion for mentoring middle schoolers through their formative years. With a background in social work and a heart for service, Miriam helps create engaging programs that encourage spiritual growth and personal connection. When she's not leading small groups, you can find her baking fresh bread, reading mystery novels, or volunteering at the local food pantry.



**MIRIAM JUSTICE**  
MIDDLE SCHOOL  
VOLUNTEER COACH

## HIGH SCHOOL VOLUNTEER COACH - SILAS KING



**SILAS KING**  
HIGH SCHOOL  
VOLUNTEER COACH

Silas is a retired high school teacher turned youth ministry enthusiast. He believes in meeting students where they are and walking alongside them as they navigate faith and life's big questions. Known for his infectious laugh and deep conversations, Silas connects with teens through storytelling, music, and sour gummy worms. Outside of youth ministry, Silas enjoys playing guitar, hiking, and pretending he knows how to surf.

## DIOCESAN YOUTH MINISTER – HEATHER CAMPBELL

Heather's first love is youth ministry, and her second love is youth ministers. Heather serves The Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis as the Diocesan Youth Minister, resourcing youth and their youth leaders. You may not see Heather around a lot, but she'll pop in every once in a while and is in touch with Tabitha often!



# Youth Ministry Programming

## Weekly Youth Group

Every Sunday evening, we gather for Youth Group – a space where young people can explore faith, build friendships, and deepen their connection to God.

A typical schedule includes:

- Worship + Games + Announcements (10-15 Minutes)
- Teaching (10-12 minutes)
- Discussion and Reflection in Small Groups (15-20 Minutes)
- Prayer Requests
- Hang Out + Dismissal

## Sunday Morning Worship

We encourage youth to participate in worship alongside their families. There are many ways for youth to get involved – from serving as acolytes and greeters to reading scripture or even sharing a sermon.

## Monthly Events

Once a month, we host special events to bring the whole youth group together for a time of fun, faith, and connection. These events are designed to foster deeper relationships and create lasting memories. We ask that volunteers make an effort to attend and help us provide a welcoming and safe environment for all youth. RSVP to let us know you're available to help!

# Youth Ministry Curriculum

## MIDDLE SCHOOL – RITE 13

Rite 13 is designed to guide middle schoolers as they begin to explore their identity, faith, and sense of belonging within the church. This program provides a structured yet engaging curriculum that encourages students to reflect on who they are, how they are uniquely created in God's image, and how they can use their gifts to serve others. Through discussions, activities, and special rites of passage, Rite 13 helps young people build a firm foundation in faith as they transition into their teenage years.

## HIGH SCHOOL – JOURNEY2ADULTHOOD

Journey2Adulthood is a transformative program that challenges high school students to think critically about their faith, relationships, and their role in the world. The curriculum emphasizes spiritual growth, leadership development, and community service, encouraging students to take ownership of their spiritual journey as they prepare to transition into adulthood. Through discussions, mentorship, and service projects, Journey2Adulthood fosters a deeper understanding of Christian discipleship and the call to love and serve others.

# Youth Ministry Calendar

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
August 8	Leader Orientation and Training
August 13	Monthly Event - Fall Kickoff
August 20	Youth Group Begins
September 10	Monthly Event
October 8-14	Fall Break (No Youth Group)
October 22	Monthly Event – Fall Festival
November 12	Bishop’s Visit / Confirmation
November 19	Monthly Event - Fall Retreat
December 10	Monthly Event – Christmas Party
December 17-Jan 6	Winter Break (No Youth Group)
December 24	Christmas Eve Service
January 7	Youth Group Resumes
January 21	Monthly Event – MLK Service Day
February 18	Monthly Event
March 10-12	Confirmation Retreat
March 10-16	Spring Break (No Youth Group)
March 24	Monthly Event – March Madness
April 12	Monthly Event – Easter Egg Hunt Service Project
April 13-20	Holy Week
April 21	Easter Sunday
May 5	Monthly Event – Bowling
May 26	Graduation Sunday
June 17	Monthly Event – Grill & Chill
July 6-11	Mission Trip

# How We Communicate

## GROUP TEXTS

We will often text you in a group chat in order to communicate. We also encourage that you be willing to text or communicate via an app with your small group or the parents of your small group! This is a great way to stay connected throughout the week.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

We utilize social media the best way that we can in order to keep track of our students. Right now, we mainly utilize Instagram: @stheathersyouth

## EMAILS TO PARENTS

We typically send a newsletter to parents each week that talks about what we are talking about that upcoming week, as well as an update on events and activities. We will add you to this list so that you see what parents see.

## EMAILS TO VOLUNTEERS

We typically send emails weekly to our volunteers, updating you on what's coming that week. We'll also include upcoming events, opportunities for enrichment, update on training dates, and maybe squeeze some devotion in there!

## ONE-ON-ONES

We'd love to take you to coffee or join your family for dinner. We want to get to know you! We'll also have the occasional phone call or FaceTime as needed.

# Youth Ministry Volunteer Profile

**Position:** Youth Ministry Volunteer

**Responsible to:** Tabitha Grace, Director of Youth Ministry

**Time Commitment:** August 2025-May 2026

## DESCRIPTION:

Youth Ministry Volunteers play a key role in creating a welcoming, safe, and engaging space for students to explore faith and build relationships. Volunteers lead small groups, connect with students and their families, and support youth ministry events.

## QUALIFICATIONS:

1. A commitment to the mission and values of St. Heather's Episcopal Church
2. Active in personal spiritual growth
3. Able to engage and communicate with both students and parents
4. Willingness to connect with students outside of weekly gatherings
5. Completion of Volunteer Orientation and Safe Church Training

## RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Lead a small group, focusing on relationship-building and spiritual discussions
2. Maintain regular contact with students – birthday calls, check-ins, etc.
3. Attend and assist at youth events and special programs
4. Be present and engaged during weekly youth group meetings
5. Model positive behavior and spiritual integrity

## OUTCOMES:

1. Build meaningful connections with students and fellow volunteers
2. Support the spiritual and personal growth of youth
3. Foster a sense of belonging and inclusion
4. Have fun!

## YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM'S PLEDGE TO YOU:

1. Provide training, resources, and ongoing support
2. Maintain open communication and feedback
3. Ensure a safe and welcoming environment for both volunteers and students

# Small Group Experience

## HANGOUT TIME

Spend the first chunk of your small group time enjoying one another's company. Play a game, shoot hoops, throw a frisbee, or just chat about life! Have the conversations that typically might derail discussion on the teaching, make some memories, and have a good time together.

## TAKING ATTENDANCE

### Who's Here?

Keeping track of who is present is more than just a task—it's a way we help ensure that every student is known, valued, and cared for. Our check-in system includes a roster and nametags. If you notice a student without a nametag, please walk with them to the check-in area to get one. Volunteers are encouraged to learn new names each week and follow up with students who may have been absent. This simple act of recognition helps build a stronger sense of community and connection for every young person in our ministry.

### Who's not here?

Keeping track of attendance also lets us know when someone is missing. When there becomes a pattern, we'll be able to follow up with them and make sure that we're connecting with them regardless if they step into the building or not. We encourage Youth Group Leaders to follow up with students that they haven't seen in a while—it's always nice to know that you're missed!

### Welcoming new Students to St Heather's

When new students show up, have them fill out a connection card. You will find these at our check-in station. This card allows St. Heather's to get information about students and their families so that we have necessary safety information but also so that we can follow up with them. Ask them to fill the card out and place in Tabitha's mailbox.

## TEACHING

Each week, we have a lesson as part of our youth group time. This can be taught by an adult or a student, but often times you'll see Tabitha teach! If you are interested in teaching, talk to Tabitha. Lessons are typically 15 minutes long, and set up the conversations for small group chats afterwards.

## SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

We believe that the most important aspect of the small group meeting is this discussion time—not the teaching video. Therefore, as a Leader your job is to facilitate meaningful discussion. Your job is not to get through the questions or to preach a second sermon. The best thing you can do is cultivate an environment where students feel welcome to

explore their faith. This environment should be safe, promote healthy discussion, and stay relatively on topic. Small group discussion guides can be found in the weekly email.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

At the end of each meeting, ask the students what they would like prayer for. This is a great way for them to share about things going on in their life and a powerful opportunity to receive prayer for these things. I encourage you to write these prayer requests down in a place you can revisit them. This is a great way to follow up on their prayer request next week or even throughout the week. This shows the student that you care about them and pay attention when they talk. When you pray, pray from the heart. Keep it simple and authentic. Occasionally invite one of the students to close in prayer!

## HOW TO KNOW THAT DISCUSSION WAS A SUCCESS

Small groups meetings can look very different from week to week. We hope that there will be some level of routine and consistency, but sometimes it can be tough to know if the meeting was successful. Here is how we measure the success of a small group experience:

**Connection:** Students feel more connected to their peers, the leader, or to God.

**Ownership:** Students begin to take ownership over their faith, an aspect of their life, or a sense of what God might be calling them to.

**Discovery:** Students discover something new about themselves, God, others, or the world.

Some weeks will be primarily connection focused and you might not experience ownership or discovery much. That is okay! We want students to be connected, and in fact we know that students need to first feel like they belong far before they will care about faith discussions. The goal however is to be able to identify areas of connection, ownership, and discovery present in each small group meeting. Please be willing to share these “wins” with Travis so that he can celebrate with you and have a sense of how the groups are doing!

# Small Group Tips & Tricks

## 1. Build the Environment

- **Choose Great Energy** – Arrive ready, prayed-up, and expectant for God to work.
- **Be Predictable but Fresh** – Have a rhythm your students can count on, but add variety to keep it engaging.
- **Set Clear Ground Rules** – Let students know what's expected (respect, listening, staying on topic, confidentiality).
- **Prioritize Relationships** – Spend time talking about their lives, not just the lesson.

## 2. Facilitate Well

- **Know Your Questions** – Understand the small group guide so you can ask in your own words.
- **Talk Less, Listen More** – Your role is to draw out their voices, not deliver a second sermon.
- **Invite Everyone In** – Use “Would anyone like to add to that?” or “Does everyone agree?” to keep multiple voices engaged.
- **Use Silence** – Give students time to think before answering.
- **Follow the Spirit** – Don't be afraid to go off-script if something big comes up.

## 3. Manage Group Dynamics

### For Quiet Groups:

- Meet in a smaller, enclosed space.
- Lower your own volume and energy to invite their participation.
- Pair them up before sharing to the whole group.

### For Loud Groups:

- Use a talking object (ball, rock, fidget) to manage turn-taking.
- Meet their need for attention before discussion time (greet them individually).
- Reinforce rules kindly but consistently.

### For All Groups:

- Keep confidentiality (unless safety is at risk).
- End on time so students leave on a high note.
- Follow up on prayer requests the next week.

## 4. Remember the Win

A small group is successful when students leave with at least one of these:

- **Connection** – They feel more connected to peers, you, or God.
- **Ownership** – They take a step in owning their faith or choices.
- **Discovery** – They learn something new about God, themselves, or others.

# Leading with other Leaders

## LEADING WITH ANOTHER ADULT CO-LEADER

**Communicate:** Communicate, and communicate! Have contact with your co-leader once a week (face-to-face, over the phone, or e-mail, before group, after group, some other time during the week). Discuss how your last group went, what you liked, what you would have changed etc., and make a plan for next week. Make the meeting time consistent so you both always know what is going on.

**Switch discussion leaders:** Each week or series tradeoff who is the main leader (you both will always be involved in the discussion; just one of you will take the reins on where it is going).

**Pray:** Together and often! Pray for your students individually, your group as a whole, and each other.

## LEADING WITH A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADER

**Be the primary leader:** While we believe whole-heartedly in a high school student's ability to lead well, it is necessary that the adult takes the lead of the group.

**Allow them to share their gifts:** Ask your high school student: Where are you comfortable sharing? Allow the student leader to take attendance, to help fill out birthday cards, to share a story during small group discussion, pray, and more! Let them shine in their "sweet spots."

**Help them discover new gifts:** Often times students leaders sign up, particularly for Confirmation, because a sibling or parent is also signed up. They may not be comfortable with praying or leading discussion. Help them feel comfortable with these things and let them know how amazing they are as much as possible!

**Train them to take over when you're gone:** If you know you'll be gone a week, take the week before to watch them lead small group. Coach them where needed.

**Hold them accountable:** High school students can sometimes be flakey—let them know they are missed when they're gone! Never shame them, but let them know how much your small group students look up to them. They are an asset to your group.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN LEADERS

Healthy teams sometimes disagree—that's normal! What matters is how we handle those moments in ways that reflect Christ's love and model respect for our youth.

When conflict arises:

1. **Pause & Pray** – Take a breath, pray for understanding, and remember you're on the same team.
2. **Talk Privately** – Never argue in front of youth. Find a moment away from the group to speak with your co-leader.
3. **Listen First** – Give space for the other person to share their perspective without interruption.
4. **Name the Impact, Not the Person** – Focus on what happened and how it affected the group, not on assigning blame.
5. **Seek a Solution Together** – Work toward a shared plan you can both support moving forward.
6. **Loop in Staff if Needed** – If the disagreement is unresolved or affects your ability to lead, talk to Tabitha or Youth Staff for support.

Our goal is unity, not uniformity. We may not always agree on the “how,” but we stay aligned on the “why.”

# Small Group Resources

## Youth Group Leader Station

We have a leader station located in our youth room. Here you'll find supplies and "hacks" to help your group have great small group conversations:

- **Birthday Cards & Blank notecards**—these are great ways to stay in touch with your students outside of Sunday morning. Fill it out and put in Tabitha's inbox. She will address, stamp, and send!
- **Playdough & Legos**—sometimes students can't pay attention, so having something to play with like Playdough is a great way to keep them engaged!
- **Fidgets**—for kids who have sensory issues, these are great to keep them engaged!
- **Basic craft supplies**—sometimes small group time can get really creative, so feel free to have your group create something to take what they've learned that day to the next level!

**Small balls**—when everyone is talking at the same time, having a ball to pass is a great way to keep it on one person at a time. Whoever has the talking ball speaks, and they can pass it to someone else to speak!

## 14 Ways to Remember Students' Names

Our goal is to know the name of each student who walks through our door—and to also know their story. Here are some tips for learning students' names:

1. Say their name quickly.
2. Use their name frequently in conversation.
3. Ask a question using their name.
4. Say their name in your departure conversation.
5. Relate their name to someone you knew previously, or to a place.
6. Take pictures of them and write their name on the back.
7. Look closely and attentively at them trying to find distinct features about them.
8. Do something fun with them. You'll remember someone with whom you've made a memory.
9. When all else fails, give them a nickname that's appropriate or sounds like their name.
10. Ask for identifying information.
11. Study the student's face while you're being introduced.
12. Ask God to help you remember and care. We remember what's important to us.
13. Write their name down (on your hand, or on paper). The act of writing will help you retain it.
14. Ask the student to test you on it.

## **42 Unhinged Icebreakers**

*This list comes from Heather, our Diocesan Youth Minister. She loves asking unhinged questions to get people to open up. Try them!*

1. If you had to fight a horse-sized duck or 100 duck-sized horses, which would you choose and why?
2. If you could swap lives with any historical figure, but had to live with their worst mistake, who would you choose?
3. Would you rather always feel like you have to sneeze but never can or always have the hiccups?
4. What's the most absurd thing you've ever done on a dare?
5. If you could only communicate using quotes from one movie for the rest of your life, which movie would it be?
6. If you were a kitchen appliance, which one would you be and why?
7. If you could have any animal, real or mythical, as your pet, which one would you choose and what would you name it?
8. If you were a character in a video game, what power-up would you have and how would it affect your daily life?
9. If you had to choose one body part to detach and reattach at will, which would it be and why?
10. If your pet could talk, what conspiracy theory would they be obsessed with?
11. If you could only eat food that starts with the letter "Z" for the rest of your life, what would you eat?
12. Would you rather have fingers for toes or toes for fingers, and how would you adapt?
13. If you could replace your laugh with any sound, what sound would you choose?
14. If you had to live in a house made entirely of one type of food, what food would it be?
15. If you could summon any inanimate object to do your bidding, what would it be and what would you make it do?
16. If you could swap the noises of any two animals, which would you swap and why?
17. If you had to wear a costume every day for the rest of your life, what would you dress up as and how would you explain it to people?
18. Would you rather have a pet dragon who constantly criticizes your life choices or a pet unicorn who teleports you places at random?
19. Would you rather have a permanent clown nose or clown shoes that squeak every time you take a step?
20. If you could have a conversation with any inanimate object, which one would it be and what would you talk about?
21. If you could have any celebrity as your personal assistant, who would it be and what bizarre tasks would you have them do?
22. Would you rather have the ability to communicate with aliens, but they can only speak in puns, or be able to time travel but only to witness historical hairstyles?
23. If you found a seagull in your house, how many seagulls would it take before you realized someone is planting seagulls in your house?

24. If you could have any condiment come out of your belly button at will (totally hygienic and controlled), what would it be?
25. If you were stranded on a desert island, and you could only bring one person, a celebrity, with you, who would you bring?
26. What's your favorite milk?
27. What's your go-to karaoke song?
28. If your heart was cracked open like a piñata, what would fall out?
29. If your shadow had a secret life when you weren't looking, what job would it have?
30. What's the most suspicious snack?
31. If you could summon one item by clapping your hands twice, but it always appears mildly cursed, what item would you choose?
32. Which household appliance is most likely to betray you, and how?
33. You get turned into a soup. What three ingredients are in it?
34. If your ex was a type of weather, what forecast would they be?
35. What's your villain origin story—and what would be your weirdly specific revenge plot?
36. If you were required to haunt one chain restaurant after you die, which one are you choosing and what's your ghost gimmick?
37. If you had a non-traditional superpower, what would you have?
38. If you were served at communion instead of Jesus, what would represent your body and blood?
39. You win the lottery but can't tell a soul. What are the signs?
40. Which section of the ChaCha Slide resonates with you the most?
41. Would you rather live in a house made of glass or a house made of beef?
42. What new Ramen Noodle flavor would you invent?

# Managing Discipline

We know that students are still learning how to navigate relationships, emotions, and boundaries—and that means they’ll make mistakes along the way. Part of our role is to help them grow from those moments, not to shame them for them. We’d much rather a student mess up in our company and receive a compassionate, restorative response than feel like they have to hide their true selves.

**When a student’s behavior needs to be addressed, our goal is to maintain dignity, repair relationships, and invite them into a better way forward.**

## Our Approach:

- 1. Address the behavior promptly and respectfully.**  
Whenever possible, have a private conversation rather than calling them out in front of the group. Public correction can be embarrassing, and sometimes even escalates the behavior.
- 2. Have a one-on-one check-in.**  
Name the specific behavior and explain why it’s not okay. Offer a clear, calm warning, and let them know what will happen if the behavior continues. Share the situation with Staff afterward so we can support you and the student.
- 3. Involve Staff when necessary.**  
For serious issues—such as bullying, physical aggression, harassment, or repeated patterns of disruption—loop in Staff right away. Staff will help mediate and determine next steps.

## When talking with a student:

- Stay calm and lead with love.
- Invite them to share their perspective: *“What happened from your point of view?”*
- Acknowledge their feelings and any possible triggers.
- Remind them of their value: *“Here’s what I appreciate about you…”*
- Name the impact of the behavior without labeling the student:  
*“When you talk while someone else is sharing, it makes it hard for them to feel heard.”*
- Explore better choices together: *“What might you do differently next time?”*
- When appropriate, invite them to make things right—through an apology, helping reset the room, or another restorative step.
- Offer encouragement so they know they are more than their mistakes.

## If You’re Struggling with a Particular Student:

Every student is made in the image of God and deserves a safe place to belong—especially the ones who are hardest to love in the moment. If you’re finding it challenging to connect, talk to Staff. There may be important context or strategies that can help. Sometimes the student who challenges us most is the one who needs consistent care the most.

# Allergies

## COMMON FOOD ALLERGENS

A child could be allergic to any food, but these “Big Nine” allergens account for 90% of all reactions in kids:

- milk
- eggs
- peanuts
- soy
- wheat
- tree nuts (such as walnuts & cashews)
- fish
- shellfish (such as shrimp)
- sesame

## FOOD ALLERGY REACTIONS

**Food allergy reactions** vary from person to person. Symptoms may be mild—such as localized hives—or severe, affecting multiple body systems. Reactions typically arise **within minutes to two hours** after exposure, though delays of several hours can occur in certain conditions.

Reactions can involve any of these body areas:

- **Skin:** itching, hives, redness, swelling (face, lips, tongue), eczema
- **Gastrointestinal tract:** nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- **Respiratory tract:** sneezing, nasal congestion, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath
- **Cardiovascular/Neurological:** lightheadedness, fainting, fast or weak pulse, sudden drop in blood pressure

A **serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)** involves at least two of these systems or features such as airway constriction, severe breathing difficulty, hypotension, or unconsciousness. It can be life-threatening and requires **immediate treatment**, usually with epinephrine.

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*IMPORTANT: If the EPI pen is used, call 911 for follow-up, in case symptoms return. Check the clock and write down the time to accurately document the event.*

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# Safety Procedures

The safety of our youth and leaders is our top priority. In all situations, follow the instructions of Youth Staff.

Youth (including those who drive) will only be released once a Youth Staff member gives the all-clear.

After any evacuation or shelter-in-place, **Group Leaders must take attendance immediately** and confirm everyone's location with Youth Staff.

## In case of Fire

- Exit Church building and go to the northeast corner of the parking lot by the Flagpole.
- No one is to enter main building until staff says so.
- Wait for clearance: Do not re-enter any building until Youth Staff or emergency responders give permission.
- In all cases, immediately take attendance of your group and verify that everyone is safe.

## In case of Tornado or other Severe Weather

- Go to the Bathrooms and huddle on the floors.
- If bathrooms are full, huddle in passageways away from windows or under desks in offices.
- Stay in place until Youth Staff or emergency services confirm it is safe.

## In case of Active Shooter

If you see a weapon or hear gunfire, **call 911 immediately** (dial 9-911 from a church phone). Youth Staff will alert the front desk with the code: "*Lockdown, lockdown, lockdown*" and report the threat location.

### **Follow the Run – Hide – Fight principles:**

- **Run:** If it is safe to escape, take youth and exit to a safe location.
- **Hide:** If escape is not possible:
  1. Move youth into classrooms or enclosed spaces, away from doors and windows.
  2. Lock the door (Youth Staff will secure exterior doors).
  3. Place a door stop under the door if it opens inward.
  4. Close blinds/cover windows, turn off lights, and stay silent.
- **Fight:** As a last resort, be prepared to defend yourself and protect the youth.

**If the threat is stopped before police arrive:**

- Secure any weapons out of reach of youth (e.g., in a high trash can) to prevent confusion or accidental harm.
  - Wait for law enforcement and follow their instructions.
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## **GENERAL REMINDERS FOR VOLUNTEERS**

- Keep calm—youth will follow your lead.
- Always prioritize getting youth to safety over personal belongings.
- Do not use phones for non-emergency communication until the situation is resolved.
- Follow all directions from Youth Staff and emergency responders.

# Inclusion & Accessibility Practices

At St. Heather's, we believe every young person is made in the image of God and deserves to feel safe, welcomed, and valued exactly as they are. This means being intentional about creating spaces that are inclusive and accessible for all youth, including those who are neurodivergent, have disabilities, or identify as LGBTQ+.

## Practical Tips:

- **Pronouns Matter** – Use the name and pronouns a student shares with you. If you're unsure, politely ask or use their name until clarified.
- **Avoid Assumptions** – Don't assume family structure, gender identity, faith background, or abilities.
- **Neurodivergent-Friendly Practices** – Offer sensory breaks, keep instructions clear and concrete, and allow for multiple ways to participate (verbal, written, creative).
- **Accessibility Checks** – Make sure seating, restrooms, and activity spaces are accessible. If you notice barriers, inform staff immediately.
- **Affirmation** – If a youth shares part of their identity with you, thank them for trusting you and listen without judgment.
- **Confidentiality with Care** – Respect privacy, while following Safe Church and legal guidelines if safety concerns arise.

**Remember:** Inclusion is not about making exceptions—it's about making *room*.

# I'm feeling burnt out...

Working with youth is deeply rewarding—but it's also real work. There may be moments when it feels hard, frustrating, or even discouraging. You might wonder if you're making a difference, or you might feel like you've hit a wall. That's a normal part of ministry.

When those moments come, we want you to know: what you are doing matters. **Sometimes the most meaningful work is also the most challenging.** You are investing in the lives of young people in ways you may never fully see this side of heaven.

Here are a few ways to care for your own spirit while you care for others:

## TEND YOUR SOUL

Ministry flows out of who we are, not just what we do. Make time for prayer, worship, and scripture—not out of obligation, but as a way to rest in God's presence and be reminded that the work is not yours alone to carry. Let God's love and grace renew you, so you have something life-giving to share.

## REFLECT HONESTLY

Ask yourself:

- What's been hardest for me lately?
- Am I tired because I'm overextended, or because I feel disconnected from the work?
- Am I holding myself to unrealistic expectations?
- Do I need new tools or strategies to connect with students?

Understanding why you're feeling depleted is the first step toward renewal.

## REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

You're not meant to serve alone. Talk to a Youth Staff member or Volunteer Coach if you're feeling overwhelmed, unsure, or stuck. They're here to listen, encourage, and help you find solutions—whether that's sharing practical tips, adjusting your role, or just being a safe sounding board.

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**Remember:** You are more than your role. Your worth is not measured by perfect outcomes, but by faithfulness to the call and care you offer. Sometimes the most faithful thing you can do is pause, rest, and let yourself be filled again.

# St. Heather's Youth Ministry

## Quick Reference Sheet

### Key Contacts:

- Director of Youth Ministry: Tabitha Grace – (555) 123-4567 – [tabitha@stheathers.org](mailto:tabitha@stheathers.org)
- Middle School Volunteer Coach: Miriam Justice – (555) 987-6543 – [miriam@stheathers.org](mailto:miriam@stheathers.org)
- High School Volunteer Coach: Silas King – (555) 555-1212 – [silas@stheathers.org](mailto:silas@stheathers.org)
- Diocesan Youth Minister: Heather Campbell – [heather@indydio.org](mailto:heather@indydio.org)

### Building Info:

- Wi-Fi: Network – STHEATHERS\_GUEST | Password – notarealchurch
- Leader Station: Youth Room (supplies, birthday cards, fidgets, extra lesson guides)
- First Aid Kit: Kitchen cabinet marked “First Aid” & Youth Room closet
- AED: Outside Fellowship Hall

### Event Basics:

- Arrival Time: 30 minutes before youth arrive
- Check-In: All youth must check in and wear a nametag
- Attendance Sheets: At Leader Station – return to Tabitha after group
- Dismissal: Youth dismissed only when given all-clear by Staff

### Emergency Procedures:

- Fire: Evacuate to NE parking lot by Flagpole – take attendance
- Severe Weather: Shelter in Bathrooms or windowless hallways
- Active Shooter: Run – Hide – Fight – follow staff lead
- Medical Emergency: Call 911, notify staff immediately, complete incident form

# Youth Group Leader Contract

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understood the Youth Group Leader Contract. In signing this form, I am committing to be a Leader for the 2025-2026 school year. I am committing to the following guidelines:

I commit to:

- **Uphold Safe Church:** I will follow our Safe Church Policy and all related guidelines for the care and protection of children and youth.
- **Care for Students:** I will take seriously the trust placed in me to guide, support, and encourage the students in my group, helping them grow in faith and community.
- **Represent the Church Well:** I understand that my words, actions, online presence, and lifestyle reflect on St. Heather's Youth Ministry, St. Heather's Episcopal Church, and the wider Church. I will strive to live and communicate in ways consistent with the values of St. Heather's.
- **Seek Support When Needed:** I will communicate openly with Youth Ministry Staff if I need help, feel overextended, or encounter challenges in my role.
- **Accept Accountability:** I understand that if I do not uphold these commitments, Youth Ministry Staff may discern that it is best for me to step out of this role.

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Signature of LEADER

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Signature of St. Heather's Staff