

# West Metro Student Ministry Parent Packet



# Welcome

## Dear Parent,

### Welcome to the West Metro Student Ministry!

We couldn't be more excited that you are interested in joining our group as we strive to follow Christ. We, as a ministry, recognize that the years of middle school and high school come with a lot of change, decision-making and discovery and our hope and prayer is that our program will help make Christ a part of the lives of teens now and beyond. That being said, we are aware that our time with any of the teens in our group is short and temporary. Because of this truth, we want to partner with you, as the parent, in developing your teenager into a faithful disciple of Christ.

#### Who we are:

We are a group made up of sixth-twelfth graders from all over the western side of Atlanta. Each of those in our group come from various background and situations but share a love for Jesus. We are also a group made up adults and parents who care deeply for the teenagers that make up our group and strive to see them grow and develop spiritually.

#### Why we're here:

We believe that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God and that He died on the cross to offer salvation to all who accept Him.

Because of this we want all teenagers to know who Jesus is, what He has done, and what that means for them. We are aware that around half of teenagers leave the faith after high school. This statistic is troubling to us and one that we want to see lowered. Because of this we strive to share the truth of God's word and the truth of what Jesus has done so that those in our group do not become another statistic.

This goal is why we meet; our faith is why we meet; our desire to share it with the next generation is why we meet. All that we do is influenced by our goal of developing a faith that lasts beyond our years together. Any of the events we plan or attend only happen if they further our goal of growing young disciples who have a lasting faith in Jesus. I can promise you that we will do all that we can to grow and equip the teenagers that join our group.

But we need your help. So, what do you say? Can we partner together? Can we work together to walk alongside your teen and make the time we have with each other years full of spiritual growth and development?

God Bless,

-Austin Gray

## CLASSES

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* -2

Timothy 3:16-17

- We have regular Bible class two times a week:
  - Sunday morning at 10:45
    - Following our worship service, which begins at 9:30, the teenagers meet for class. We either meet as an entire group or have separate classes for the middle school and high school students. Our Sunday morning class is built around our yearly theme and is more topical in nature. The theme will always have a focus on practical application for a teenage Christian.
  - Wednesday evening at 7:00
    - On Wednesday's the entire group meets to study a specific book of the Bible. We do a verse by verse and chapter by chapter study of a book chosen by the teens. The purpose of this is to emphasize a growing knowledge of Scripture and to see how it applies to teens living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Books that have been studied so far include Acts, Genesis, Revelation, and the Gospels.
- Beyond our regularly scheduled classes we offer more opportunities to learn and study:
  - Occasional home devotionals hosted by families of the congregation.
  - A devotional as part of each event we have.
  - Small groups that meet at several homes on congregation members. Small groups take place of a Sunday evening service that is typical at other churches. Teens are encouraged to be a part of these groups.
- Who can attend class?
  - All 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders are invited and encouraged to be a part of our group and attend class.
  - Parents are also invited and encouraged to be a part of class. This assists the teacher with keeping class organized and provides another Christian role model for the students.
- Who is teaching these classes?
  - Typically, our youth minister, Austin Gray, plans and teaches our classes.
  - When our Sunday morning class is split, whether by age or gender, a teacher is selected from the congregation and given material to teach the given class in accordance with the established focus at the time.
  - Substitutes are often called on when Austin has to be away whether for personal reasons or on a trip with members of the youth group.

Come as you are and join us for class. YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

## Activities

*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them - Matthew 18:20*

We want to spend time together in meaningful and uplifting ways. We want to create times and spaces where students can be surrounded by other Christians. We accomplish this by hosting and attending a variety of events. Events allow students to break their normal routine, get outside their comfort zone, have fun in a Christian environment, and even move forward in their spiritual walk. Here's what we do:

- **Monthly gatherings for our youth group:** This could be a bowling night, a trip to the arcade and laser tag, game nights, kiddie pool kickball, a Christmas party and more.
- **Home devotionals:** hosted by church families where we share a meal and a time of fellowship centered around Christ.
- **Large events:** Gulf Youth Experience MLK weekend down in Gulf Shores, Alabama. Lads2Leaders/Leaderettes year-round with the culmination being the convention in Atlanta Easter weekend. Impact at Lipscomb University during the summer. Summer camp hosted by West Metro. A retreat held one weekend during the fall/winter.

## Service

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. – 1 Peter 4:10*

Jesus, shortly before His arrest and crucifixion, took time to set an example of how to serve one another and others by washing His disciples feet. We recognize and believe that this is an example for us to follow today and desire to develop servant hearts in the youth of the world today. We accomplish this by:

- **Serving our community and world** – Christ did not only serve those who He was closest to. He served all people.
  - o Food cabinet at Hiram High School
  - o Helping with yard work in the community
  - o Writing cards and making gift baskets for those in need.
  - o Donating to support a child in Trujillo, Honduras attend school
- **Serving our congregation** – We strive to help those of our own church when they are in need and to be active members in our congregation:
  - o Helping members with yard work, moving, etc.
  - o Serving at adult events
  - o Setting up for VBS and other events
  - o Reading Scripture, serving communion, helping in the A/V booth, assisting in the children's ministry

# Communication

*The words of the reckless pierce like swords but the tongue of the wise brings healing*

– Proverbs 12:18

We want to remain in contact with all that are a part of our group. This allows us to keep parents informed about all that is going on in the group and gives you a chance to keep us informed about what you need from us and to ask any questions you have.

**Email:** The best way to stay informed about all that is going on with the West Metro Church of Christ youth group is through joining our email list. Through email, Austin informs all parents about upcoming events, costs, shares registration forms, etc. Email is also a great way to get in contact with Austin regarding any questions. The email to reach out to is:

[austindgray1998@gmail.com](mailto:austindgray1998@gmail.com)

**Church Website/Calendar:** The West Metro website is another valuable source for information. Here you can find general information about our church and our youth group. The Calendar, posted on the events tab, will also provide valuable information regarding events and signups. An app is also available that provides another source of information.

<https://www.westmetrocofc.org/>

**Facebook:** West Metro has two Facebook pages. One is open to the public and the other is a private page that is also used to share youth related information too. If, and I hope you do, join our group, we will have you added to that page so that you have multiple avenues to receive information. <https://www.facebook.com/WestMetroCofC>

**Face to Face:** Our preferred method of communicating with anyone will always be in person. If you have any questions or would simply like to know more about our group, please come and talk to Austin in person.

## What we need/want from You

- Whenever your student is having a special performance, sporting event, or are being recognized for something, we would love to know! We as a group seek out events like this where we can support each other and enjoy fellowship with each other. This doesn't mean that we can be at every event, but we can't be there if we don't know about it!
- If your student is ever in the hospital or struggling in some way, please let us know ASAP! We want to be praying for them and to be able to come visit if possible.
- If you have any questions, concerns, complaints, praises, etc. please give them! We never know how we can serve families better if you don't tell us (and we want to serve each family better)! We need your communicate with us. If there is anything you need or an issue that needs addressing, please let someone on of our youth team know.

# Safety and Guidelines

*The Lord is good a refuge in times of trouble He cares for those who trust in him – Nahum 1:7*

The last thing in the packet is also the most important. Feel good with your teens in the West Metro Youth program. Hopefully this packet has helped you get a peek at our values and our vision for how we minister to teens. But on top of knowing why and how we help our students develop a faith that lasts, we also want you to know that we work hard to make our youth ministry a safe place. We know that being trusted with your teens is a huge blessing and a huge responsibility, and we take that seriously. The final thing in this packet is a set of guidelines we follow in this ministry. We look forward to partnering with you as we minister to your teenager. May God bless our time together! We place the highest possible priority on providing a safe environment for our students and volunteers. Volunteers are expected to adhere to the guidelines listed below to ensure we do everything in our power to protect our students from harm.

- Child Abuse Prevention: Each volunteer must submit to a criminal background check. While we believe in and practice grace and forgiveness, no one with a history of sexual misconduct with minors will be permitted to work in our youth ministry. We will, however, work with that person to help them find a different ministry in which they can flourish.
  - We will take every allegation of abuse seriously. We will handle the situation in a straightforward manner, with respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
  - Volunteers will report any signs or accusations of abuse, sexual, physical, or emotional, to the youth minister, who will then evaluate and contact the parents and proper authorities.
  - Volunteers will report to the youth minister any signs or allegations that a student is harmful to him/herself or to others. The youth minister will then determine which authorities need to be informed.
  - We will make sure the victim knows that he/she is not being held responsible in any way.
  - We will not confront the accused until the safety of the child is secured.
  - We will not prejudge the situation, but we will take the allegations seriously.
  - We will treat the accused person with dignity and respect.
  - If a volunteer or staff person is accused, they will be immediately removed from all responsibilities and contact with students until appropriate actions can be determined.
- Discipleship Guidelines
  - Before meeting with students one-on-one, volunteers should inform and ask permission from parents.
  - No adult should ever be alone with a teenager in a secluded place. Relational ministry and discipleship often happen in a one-on-one setting, but there is never any reason for this to be done in seclusion.
  - When meeting with a teenager, choose a location where other people are present like a restaurant, mall, or even a house with other people around.
  - This rule also applies to driving. When possible, have the teen meet you and have parents pick them up.

- Where driving them is unavoidable, it is better to have more than one kid in the car with you. If you must drive a teen one-on-one, always get parental permission first, and go directly to your stated destination(s).
- If possible, find ways to record when you get to each location (ie, have teen text their parents as you leave to take them home). In our relationships with teens, our overarching principles should be avoiding the appearance of evil and living righteously. If you come upon a specific situation that is not addressed, keep these principles in mind.
- Confidentiality Policy:
  - Our teens have a right to confidentiality in most circumstances. When dealing with serious sin or deep issues, our ultimate goal is always helping teens get to a place where they can invite their parents into the situation. But at all times, our teens need to know they can safely open up to volunteers. With that in mind, no minister/volunteer shall ever consider the following confidential:
    - Knowledge or reasonable suspicion of child abuse, current or past
    - Knowledge of a youth's intention to inflict injury upon him/herself or upon someone else
    - Knowledge of a risk of suicide
    - If a teen reveals any of these things (or if there is good reason for suspicion), the volunteer will immediately inform the youth minister, who will then determine which authorities need to be informed.
  - All concerns will be brought to the youth minister, youth deacon, or elders, who will advise on next steps.
- Traveling:
  - When traveling with teenagers in personal vehicles:
    - All students and adults will be required to use seat belts.
    - Follow all posted speed limits. This both protects our teens and sets a good example.
    - Under no circumstances should you text while driving. If it is important, either pull over to send the text or have a teenager send it for you.
    - Do not talk on your cell phone without the use of a hands-free device. iv.! 15! !
  - On trips, no single adult will stay in a room with minors, no single teen will stay in a room with multiple adults, and no teen will stay in a hotel room by himself/herself.
  - We will always seek to have at least one male and one female sponsor on mixed-gender trips of any length.
  - There will always be at least one male and one female sponsor on mixed-gender overnight trips, or the trip will not happen.
- Inappropriate Relationships

- If we become aware of inappropriate attraction (ex: a teenage boy confesses a strong attraction or crush on a female volunteer) we will do the following things:
  - Make the volunteer aware of the situation so that he/she may act in wisdom
  - Counsel the student and help him/her find appropriate outlets of affection
  - Limit personal contact between that volunteer and student
- If we become aware of inappropriate (non-abusive) attraction, attention, contact, or action from an adult toward a student, we will:
  - Remove the adult from all youth ministry responsibilities and activities.
  - Refer him/her to a counselor who can help the adult work through the unhealthy attraction/behavior.
  - Hold the adult accountable to a no contact agreement. If the agreement is broken, the child's parents will be informed, and confidentiality will not be considered to have been broken.
- Digital Communication Guidelines
  - When possible, we always want to foster and encourage face-to-face, relational communication. However, because so much communication now happens digitally, the following guidelines will be used:
    - When communicating in a public forum like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, avoid the use of private messages. If you are unable to post something publicly, don't post it at all.
    - Texting is good for communicating quick bits of information, but it is a poor tool for important communication.
    - If a teen wants to engage in a longer conversation, find a way to do that face to face.
    - Do not post any photos of teens outside of the private Facebook page.
- **To aid us in keeping safety as a priority of our youth program there are some forms we need filled out for anyone who seeks to be a member of our group or a volunteer:**



Criminal History      ParentMedReleaseFo  
Consent Form 2025.pdf      rm.pdf.pdf