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Philosophy of Youth Ministry

**Grace Church
Ridgewood NJ**

Philosophy Statement

Mission: The Grace Church Youth Ministry exists to help teens pursue Christ and continue to grow on their lifelong spiritual journey by creating opportunities for them to learn to love and trust Jesus and make a difference in our world for Him through worship, community, service and mission.

Vision: The Grace Church Youth Ministry seeks to provide dynamic environments that:

BUILD teens in their faith through worship, the Word, prayer, and fellowship.

- Learning to love God
 - ✓ Expressing our love for God through worship
 - ✓ Relying on the Word as our source of wisdom and truth
 - ✓ Depending on prayer as our source of guidance and strength
- Learning to love others
 - ✓ Intentionally pursuing Christ-centered relationships within the group

EQUIP teens with tools to help them discover and develop their gifts and talents.

- Discovering spiritual gifts and talents
 - ✓ Teaching and training all teens about their spiritual gifts so that they may do works of service and the body of Christ may be built up
- Developing spiritual leadership
 - ✓ Encouraging teens to develop as spiritual leaders and mentors of others in the group

CHALLENGE teens to serve others and to reach pre-believers with the Gospel.

- Through personal outreach
- Through programmed outreach events
- Through missions/service
 - ✓ Seeking to reach:
 - Jerusalem – our immediate spheres of influence including campus, families and neighborhood
 - Judea/Samaria – domestic missions work in the US (concentrating on the Northeast)
 - Ends of the Earth – foreign missions work around the world

Youth Ministry Goals/Strategies

BUILD teens in their faith through worship, the Word, prayer, and fellowship.

- Learning to love God
 - ✓ Worship that includes, but is not limited to, singing, silence and “God-sightings” (where teens see God during the week) (bp) will take place each week
 - ✓ Reading, studying and applying God’s Word to everyday life
 - ✓ Prayer that includes, but is not limited to: large group prayer time, small group prayer and personal prayer will take place each week (bp)
- Learning to love Others
 - ✓ Prayer requests are received from people to be prayed for by SALTeam
 - ✓ Mingle time is built into planning to help break down walls between people (bp)
 - ✓ “SOUP,” a buzz word, is used to encourage that new relationships are created and the negative side of cliques are interrupted (bp)
 - ✓ Games with a purpose will be played each week to help foster intermingling of people
 - ✓ Small groups are strongly encouraged with fellowship and accountability as their main purposes (bp)
 - ✓ Activities are offered to provide an additional environment outside of weekly meeting time for teens and leaders to get to know each other better

Goals for **Build**

Teens who grow stronger in their faith are more likely to attend church in the years post high school.

Goals at the Grace Church youth ministry (YM) toward this end are that teens, wherever they are on their spiritual journey, will grow more like Jesus. They will learn about God from His Word, about His plan for their life, and will commit themselves to the Lord. As Christ followers, the goals for teens (and adults) are that they will practice daily devotions, be diligent in prayer, and will seek to follow Jesus in every aspect of their life. Bible-based lessons and worship will always have an application for teens (bp).

YM has a lot to do with being with other teens, having fun, and building relationships that will support and encourage one another in the faith. To this end, the ministry designs activities that will help teens get to know and care for one another, be sensitive to the needs of others, and to worship and serve together (bp).

(bp) signifies a best practice

EQUIP teens with leadership tools and help them discover their gifts and talents

- **Discovering Spiritual Gifts and Talents**
 - ✓ Encourage teens to use their natural gifts in and out of youth group (bp)
 - ✓ Encourage teens to give God the glory with their talents outside of youth group
 - ✓ Teach in depth about spiritual gifts every other year (bp)
 - ✓ Teach on SHAPE of teens every third year
 - **Spiritual Gifts** – *How has God gifted you?*
 - **Heart** – *What do you love to do? What are you passionate about?*
 - **Abilities** – *What natural abilities or talents were you born with or did you develop before your relationship with Jesus?*
 - **Personality** – *How will your unique personality impact your ministry?*
 - **Experience** – *How can your experiences, both good and bad, be used to help others?*
 - ✓ Provide teens with opportunities to use their spiritual gifts throughout the youth group and larger church body (bp)
- **Developing Spiritual Leadership**
 - ✓ Encourage teens to take leadership positions in various ways throughout the year (bp)
 - ✓ Timothy Group
 - *What?* – Skills are taught including servant leadership and spiritual gifts as well as assessing where the ministry is strong and weak, addressing the current needs of the ministry and applying what we corporately and individually will do to address these needs.
 - *How?* – Identify a team of people who are concerned with sharing the work of the ministry. Look for those who are faithful, available, teachable and responsive. Timothy is made available to all teens twice a year (August & December). An online application is to be filled out with three references. The application is distributed to the entire youth staff for comments and questions. After a consensus is reached, the teen is either invited to join the team or encouraged to continue to grow in the relationship with Christ and reapply later.

Goals for **Equip**

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CHALLENGE teens to reach pre-believers with the Gospel and to serve others

- **Through Personal Outreach**
 - ✓ Train and encourage teens to intentionally develop relationships with unbelieving friends, know and share their faith story, invite them to attend outreach events and pray for their receptivity (bp)
- **Through Programmed Outreach**
 - ✓ By what means is this accomplished?
 - Activity – break down tensions pre-believers feel when entering a new group with an interactive activity
 - Presentation – expose pre-believers to Jesus in a positive way through structured communication
 - Interaction – teens seek to relationally connect and share Jesus. This component allows everyone to engage in personal outreach
 - ✓ By what strategies is this done?
 - *Cultivating* – A teen shares about their relationship with Jesus followed by prayer from leader
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- **Through Missions and Service to others**
 - ✓ Financially supporting *sponsored children* teaches teens the importance of sacrificial giving for the sake of others in need (bp)
 - ✓ *Quarterly Service Projects* – Opportunities are given quarterly for teens to get out of their comfort zone and put others first by serving them. Examples of this include: Eastern Christian Children’s Retreat, The Cottage, Oasis Women’s Shelter and Food Banks (bp)
 - ✓ *Mission Education Projects (MEP)* – Each summer, opportunities are given for teens to spend an extended time away from home.
 - Domestic missions work in the US (concentrating on the Northeast) – we have ministered in Philadelphia, PA; Boston, MA; Westborough, MA; Lyndonville, VT; and Alton Bay, NH
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Goals for **Challenge**

Encourage teens to cultivate friendships with others who have yet to come to faith (bp). It is our goal that teens would use these friendships to lead others to the love of Christ through their personal sharing of the Gospel. Programmed events like Big Nights will be held as an ongoing opportunity for teens to invite friends and introduce them to Jesus. Encourage teens to participate in ministries that require them to give of their treasure, talent, time, and love. Teens will learn to value and take part in charitable giving for the children we support through Handfuls of Hope. Teens will participate in quarterly service projects (bp). For teens that are looking to further their mission/outreach experience and training, they will participate in an MEP (Mission Education Project). These projects help teens experience obedience to Christ by serving people in communities close to home as well as in foreign countries (bp).

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Program Assessment Questions (PAQ's)

These are a set of questions to be asked and discussed among the youth staff to help with ongoing program assessment.

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1. Are the teens participating in prayer? (Active listening and active vocally)
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3. Do we as staff members see an increased knowledge of God's Word?
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Equip –

1. Are the teens discovering their spiritual gifts?
2. Are they using them and if so how?
3. Are the teens beginning to grow in their spiritual strengths?

Challenge –

1. Are the teens encouraging one another in fellowship?
2. Are the teens beginning to feel comfortable sharing their faith?
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4. Are the teens showing an interest/better understanding of missions?

General –

Are we seeing a decrease or attitude change in the following: cursing, sexual relations, general disrespect, bullying/cliques?

Are we seeing an increase in: Gentleness, Respect, Accepting others, Reverence for the Bible, Seeking God's will and Doing It, Accepting Responsibilities for things and seeking to change patterns?

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