

YOUTH GROUP - IMPORTANT INFO - FALL 2019

Adult Moderator Contact Info

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Youth Group Communication

- Email is our primary method of communication
 - It is important to check your email regularly, especially when meetings/events are coming up.
 - There are times that we need prompt responses – so please get back to us ASAP!
 - Every YG member will receive a “test” email within a week of joining – we ask that you please reply to confirm we have your email address correct on our list.
- Please be sure to add our YG email address (saintagnesyouthgroup@gmail.com) to your address book, as well as Barb and Rob’s email addresses (above), so that you’ll receive our YG emails.

www.StAgnesYouthGroup.com

- Our website is the ultimate resource both for you and for your parents.
- The handbook, schedule, permission slips, and all handouts are available to download.
- Additionally, any updates will be posted to the homepage, such as weather cancellations.

Youth Group Handbook

- The YG handbook is uploaded to the website, and is **only** available online.
 - It is your responsibility to log onto the website and review the handbook.
 - You are responsible for following **all** rules and policies.
- **ALL YG members must return a completed “Registration Packet”, which is to be completed by the parent that has signed, or will be signing, the YG Book. (See pg. 2 for more information)**
- The packet must be completed by **ALL members** – both new and returning – every year.
- **The packet is due back within two meetings after you join YG for the year.**
 - YG members will **not** be permitted to attend trips without returning the packet **PRIOR** to the morning of a trip.

Schedule

- There are times listed for a reason – Please do your best to arrive on time, and make sure your rides are at church **by** the designated end time! We would like to start on time and we almost always end on time.
- Please, consult the schedule before emailing or texting us to ask what time something is.
 - It’s on the website, so you’ll never have to worry about losing it!
- Share it with your parents/guardians so that they are aware of when events and meetings are!
- Take note of the different start/end times and dates for special events and meetings.

Leaving Meetings Early

- Any YG member needing to leave any function prior to its scheduled end time **MUST** bring a note signed by their parent who signed the YG Book, stating the time of departure and who will be picking them up.
- No one will be allowed to leave early without a signed note.

Parent/Guardian Signatures in Youth Group Book

- All NEW members **must** have at least one parent come into the building at the start or the end time of a meeting, at one of the first 2 meetings the YG member attends, to sign the youth group book, in order for us to ensure the authenticity of the signature on all parental notes received.
 - This procedure is in place for the safety of the youth members, as well as to protect the church and the adult moderators running Youth Group.
 - It is recommended that both parents sign the YG Book, to avoid running into a last minute situation where the parent whose signature on file isn't available to sign a document.
 - Coming in to sign the book will only take a few minutes, and it only has to be done once for the duration of your time as a member of Youth Group.
 - All permission slips and forms **must be** signed by this parent whose signature is on file.
 - YG members will **not** be permitted to attend trips without a parental signature on file.
 - Note: we cannot have parents coming in to sign the book on the morning of a trip – so please plan ahead!
- Parents who have previously signed the book **do not** need to do so again- all signatures are kept on file.
- If your parent has signed the book in a prior year for an older sibling, they do not have to come back in to sign again. Check with Rob if you're not sure.

Attendance

- Attendance is NOT mandatory for regular meetings!
 - We understand that there will be times that you have other commitments.
 - The more meetings and events that you attend, the more you will get to know your peers, as well as get more out of your Youth Group experience.
 - If you cannot make a meeting because of family, sports, or school conflicts, you can email us at saintagnesyouthgroup@gmail.com before the meeting, and we will mark it on the attendance sheet.
 - This can factor into play at various times, including for Stations roles & Core Team additions.
- There are only a few times where Attendance rules come into play:
 - To qualify for the “The Lock-In”- November 23-24
 - You must attend a total of 3 YG events, with at least one of them being a service event.
 - The service events are the Pumpkin Trip, Food Bank Trip, and Rake and Run.
 - The Lock-In is a reward for those that are participating in Y.G. and serving their community.
 - During “Living Stations” (January-Easter)
 - Youth Group's major undertaking, and biggest gift to the parish
 - Attendance is mandatory for Stations practices – only one missed practice is allowed.
 - We need consistency week to week in order to have the production be successful.
 - To qualify for the “Six Flags Trip” (May 2020)
 - Two ways to earn the trip:
 - Be a part of Stations OR
 - Attend 2 service activities in the Fall Schedule
 - You must be an active member of Y.G. during the spring as well, to be eligible for the trip!

Permission Slips

- **ALL** permission slips must be signed by your parent whose signature is on file.
- You can turn in ALL of your fall permission slips at once. We will sort them out for the respective trips.
 - We encourage you to do this for two reasons:
 1. You won't have to worry about forgetting each one on the respective trip day.
 2. We can sort the slips out ahead of time to save time with check-ins on the morning of the trip.
- Without a correctly signed permission slip you will **NOT** attend the trip.
 - NO exceptions, NO telephone calls, NO delaying the trip waiting for it to arrive.
 - You are responsible for following the rules. **It's on you, not your parents.**
- Permission slips for our fall activities will be distributed in hard copy (with the Trip RSVP/Parent Driver Form) at the September 15th meeting, and they will also be uploaded to the YG website.

Food and Drink Policy

- Snacks and drinks are provided at almost every YG function.
- There are times during the year that YG members are invited to bring baked goods, etc. such as the Lock-In, Christmas party, etc.
- **NO outside drinks are permitted at any YG function unless specified otherwise.**
 - During the fall, outside drinks are only allowed for the Pumpkin Trip, as we eat lunch at the farm.

Youth Group Shirts:

- Our *entire* group wears them when we do things as a group, such as service events, fundraisers and trips. It is both a way to show unity amongst us, as well as represent where we are from!
- The shirts are \$15 each.
- The front has the design on the right, and the back reads "St. Agnes Youth Group – We Walk by Faith".
- Please do NOT wait until the day of an event to buy your shirt
 - There is too much to be done to get the trip off and running, so we will NOT be selling them the day of the trip.
- If you wait too long, you may also run the risk of us being sold out of your particular size.



Youth Group Masses

- Continuing our tradition, we will be attending one mass a month as a Youth Group, starting in October
- Please consult the schedule for the dates and times.
- We strongly encourage *all* of our youth group members to attend our masses, and *with your families!*
 - YG families are invited to sit on the choir side of church behind the YG members.

Important Dates to Save for 2020!

- Living Stations – Palm Sunday, April 5th
- Six Flags Trip – Sunday May 17th
- Baccalaureate Mass – Sunday May 31st

[Note: If we learn of significant conflicts, these dates are subject to change.]

Clothing Drives

- Each year we run two clothing drives within the parish – one in the fall, the other in the spring.
 - However, we collect **year-round**, and call for pickups as necessary.
- The clothing drive benefits all parties involved. You gain closet/dresser space, the needy receive much needed clothing, and Youth Group receives funding.
- All items donated to the drive are distributed as clothing to those in need – they are not shredded for rags as many of the metal collection bins do.
- Being that the clothing drives are YG fundraisers, we ask all families to participate.
- We encourage all youth group members to spread the word to family, friends, and neighbors, that if they are cleaning out clothes (and household cloth items) with the changing of the seasons, to bag the items and save them for our clothing drive!
 - Several parents over the years have posted a note at work to let their co-workers know about our clothing drives, and the idea has proven successful as their co-workers then brought bags in to them for our drive rather than throwing them in a random metal bin.
- Email reminders will be sent out as each drive approaches.
- The YG final meeting before the fall drive is Sunday September 30th.
- Donation receipts are available upon request.

If you have bags to donate at **any point during the year, you can bring them in to **any** YG function, as we can store them in the YG office or storage room until the next drive.**

- You can also contact Barb or Rob if YG is on break and you need the bags out of your way sooner.

NOTE: The metal bins in the church parking lot are **NOT** associated with **NOR** benefit our YG clothing drives. They are controlled by and benefit the Archdiocese of Newark.

- So always bring any donation bags you may have in to a YG function, don't put them in the metal bins!

A list of items that can be donated to the St Agnes Clothing Drive:

- Any clothing items:
 - Shirts, pants, dresses, sports/school uniforms, etc.
 - Summer: shorts, tank tops, swimsuits, etc.
 - Winter: jackets, sweaters, etc.
 - Accessories: hats, socks, belts, scarves, ties, etc.
(Basically, anything and everything that you could wear)
- Footwear: Shoes, sneakers, boots, sandals, etc.(in decent condition, and in a complete pair
- Household items: blankets, curtains, sheets, tablecloths, bedding, towels, etc.
- Purses, backpacks, handbags
- Stuffed Animals and Soft Toys

Protecting God's Children Policy

- All parents volunteering to work with the Youth Group, including as drivers for our trips, **MUST** hold current certification through the “Protecting God’s Children” program.
- The PGC certification is valid for five years, at which point you’ll need to re-certify.
- There are three components to the PGC program:
 - Course certification (initial – Protecting God’s Children, re-certification – Keeping the Promise Alive)
 - Authorizing a background check (which needs to be updated every 5 years).
 - Completing the volunteer application and returning it to the Parish Office, along with your course certificate.
- **We ask that at least one parent of each Youth Group member to hold current certification, as the fall trips cannot happen without the assistance of parent drivers.**
 - Each trip requires approximately 10-15 parent drivers, thus requiring a minimum of 30-45 trained parents, as the goal is not to have any parent drive for more than one fall trip.
- Parents who opt not to attend the course, or choose to let their certification lapse, will put their child’s position to attend trips in jeopardy, as we have to be fair to the kids whose parents have committed their time to complete the program and assist us.
 - On the morning of each trip, cars will be filled with YG members whose parents have met the training requirement. Should any seats remain, YG kids whose parents did not complete the training will have their names pulled at random to determine who goes on the trip, and who will go home.
- **A PGC course is scheduled at St. Agnes for September 29th at 6:30pm, in conjunction with our YG meeting that night.** Parents attending that course can drop their YG kids off to the meeting early, and we’ll extend the meeting for those kids until the course ends. Younger siblings cannot attend the YG meeting **nor** the course.
 - Advance registration on the Virtus website is required for the PGC course.
 - Many other local parishes will be offering sessions of the PGC course over the next few months.
 - Please see the “PGC Registration Information” page for more information on how to view a full list of course dates as well as how to register online.
- If you have taken the course previously, you should receive monthly articles by email from the Virtus system.
 - By reading the articles and answering the questions that follow them, you’ll stay in good standing with the Virtus program, which will make online re-certification a more likely possibility.
 - If you do not receive the monthly articles via email, but would like to, please contact Larry Boland at lawrence.boland@rcan.org or 973-497-4012 for assistance.
- Recertification can be completed by one of the following methods:
 - Attending the Keeping the Promise Alive re-certification course (approx.. 1-1.5 hours)
 - Registration must be done in advance - either online using your original Virtus login account information, or by contacting Larry Boland.
 - Check the Virtus website for the most up-to-date KPA course offerings.
 - Re-taking the Protecting God’s Children course.
 - Contacting Larry Boland to inquire about online re-certification.

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Protecting God's Children Policy (cont)

The St Agnes PGC procedure is as follows:

- Register on Virtus Online (www.virtus.org) to sign up for the Protecting God's Children workshop, and to complete the background check.
- **All** volunteers must complete a packet which includes a volunteer application and the Archdiocesan Code of Ethics. The packet can be downloaded at www.StAgnesYouthGroup.com/PGCPacket. Printed copies are available upon request.
 - The **original** PGC workshop attendance **certificate** needs to accompany the packet.
 - Completed packets should be sent to the parish office:
 - St Agnes Church
 - 332 Madison Hill Road
 - Clark, NJ 07066
 - Attn: Janine Matthews – PGC

Once the completed paperwork is received and the background screening is completed, you will receive the following for your records:

- A letter of approval resulting from the background screening
- A copy of the certificate of completion for attending the Protecting God's Children workshop.

A re-screening and refresher course are required every five years.

If you need further assistance, contact Janine Matthews at 732-388-7852 ext 1.

Trips & Parent Drivers

- There are the three trips in the fall – the Pumpkin Trip, the Food Bank Trip, and the Rake and Run.
- We will distribute the “Trip RSVP & Parent Driver Form” at the September 15th meeting.
 - **Please have your parent complete the form, and return it no later than the meeting on October 6th. Sooner is always better!**
 - If you cannot attend the 10/6 meeting, the forms may also be dropped off at the parish office in an envelope marked for Youth Group.
 - Members who join for the year on or after 10/6 will be given a grace period to return the form.
- One parent per youth group member **must** sign up to drive for at least one of our trips. Failure to do so may result in your child being unable to attend a trip due to lack of drivers.
 - The parent driver must hold current certification through the “Protecting God’s Children” program, as described previously.
 - YG members whose parents commit to drive for trips will take first priority in the vehicles on the morning of the trip. If any seats remain, YG members whose parents did not sign up to drive for any trip date will have their names pulled at random to determine who goes on the trip, and who goes home.
- We will put together a Parent Driver Schedule, doing our best to make sure that each parent only has to drive once during this fall schedule. If every parent signs up to drive, there will be no need for duplication.
- After the schedule is distributed, any parent having to back out **MUST** find another parent to drive in their place and to cover the same number of seats, or else the number of kids planned for your vehicle will have no ride. Your failure to find a replacement will result in your child being excluded from the trip.
- **The driving schedule will be distributed no later than the meeting on Sunday October 20th (the first trip is on the 26th).**
- We truly appreciate your parents’ help to make these programs happen!

Pumpkin Picking Trip:

- Saturday October 26th – 9:00am-5:00pm
 - We meet in the Whelan Center (downstairs) by 9a, and return to the parking lot by 5p.
 - We go to a farm that both sells pumpkins and has an awesome 10-acre corn maze.
 - Each YG member will be buying at least one pumpkin to paint and deliver to the nursing home residents. (You can buy additional pumpkins for yourself if you want.)
 - **BRING MONEY WITH YOU** – we will give an estimate of the corn maze price and the pumpkin cost as the trip approaches, once we find out the prices from the farm!
 - Following the pumpkin picking, we return to St. Agnes to paint the pumpkins.
 - To end the day, we go to the nursing home, and visit with the residents- not just to hand them the pumpkin, but to start a conversation and visit with them- We could be their only visitors they have that week.
 - Parent Drivers will be needed (see the earlier section for more details)
- **BRING YOUR LUNCH AND DRINK!!!!** We eat lunch at the farm.
- You must have a completed permission slip to attend, signed by your parent that signed the YG book!
- Wear your YG Shirts!
- Rain date procedure:
 - Check the Website / your Email for any updates.
 - We will keep an eye on the weather forecast, and post an update as soon as we can.
 - If we postpone the Saturday event to the Sunday- there is NO meeting on Saturday
 - The times will remain the same-it will just take place the next day (Sunday)

Food Bank Trip:

- Saturday November 2nd – 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM
- Meet in the Whelan Center (downstairs) at 10:30 AM. We will return to the church parking lot by 2:30PM.
- We will help with various jobs needed by the food bank, such as the sorting and repacking of food for distribution, packing clothing, stuffing mailing envelopes and more.
- Wear your Y.G. Shirts
- You must have a completed permission slip to attend, signed by your parent that signed the YG book!
- Parent drivers will once again be needed! (see the earlier section for more details)

Rake and Run:

- Saturday November 16th – 10:00am-5:00pm
- Meet in the Whelan Center (downstairs).
- We will return to the church parking lot by 5:00pm
 - Depending on how many houses end up on the list, the day could be significantly shorter – but we will not go past 5:00.
- **YOU MUST BRING YOUR OWN RAKE!!!!!!** Please label your rake with your name ahead of time!
- A form will be put in the bulletin for people to sign up others (or themselves if applicable) who are either elderly or disabled (or both) who normally have to rake their own leaves.
 - If you know anyone in our area that fits the criterion, please let us know their name/address.
- **BRING YOUR LUNCH (food only, no drinks)!** We will come back to St. Agnes for a lunch break.
 - The usual soda/tea/lemonade/water will be provided for lunch.
- Wear your Y.G. Shirts!!
- You must have a completed permission slip to attend, signed by your parent that signed the YG book!
- Parent Drivers will be needed. (see the earlier section for more details)
- The rain date policy will be the same as the pumpkin trip- check the Website /your Email as the event draws near!

The Lock-In:

- November 23rd-24th – Saturday into Sunday
- We meet in the gym to begin the overnight retreat at 5:00pm.
- Following 5:30 mass, we have dinner before starting the night's events.
- Midway through the night we also have appetizer-type foods (such as chicken nuggets, pizza bagels, etc.)
- There is a point later in the night (early morning) that you will have time to socialize/relax/eat/sleep after we finish the schedule of activities.
- Have your ride AT church BY 7am!! You'll be ready to go home to sleep, and so will we!
- We collect all cell phones, watches, iPods, and any other electronic devices and lock them in the YG office until the morning- knowing the time, texting, etc. takes away from the experience of the night.
 - Better still -- LEAVE THEM AT HOME!!!!
 - The adult moderators will have their phones if your parents need to reach you, or we need to reach them!
- It is by far everyone's favorite event of the year, largely in part because of how well you get to know your peers, forming a tighter bond between the entire group.
- See the attendance section of either this packet, or the handbook, for the Lock-In qualification requirements.
- You must have a completed permission slip to attend, signed by your parent that signed the YG Book!
- All qualified members will be required to RSVP to an email sent by Rob/Barb during the week preceding the Lock-In.
 - Failure to RSVP will result in not being permitted to attend the Lock-In
- No YG members will be allowed to arrive to the Lock-In late, except in the case of extenuating circumstances out of your control.
 - Choosing to attend a play, sporting event, party, etc. does NOT constitute an extenuating circumstance.
- In the event that the Lock-In needs to be postponed, it will be rescheduled for a Saturday-Sunday in January.