

**SERVING AS A YOUTH MENTOR:
Discussion of a Call to Ministry**

**Youth Mentor Job Description
Trinity Church in the City of Boston
Youth Ministries Program**

SERVING AS A YOUTH MENTOR: DISCUSSION OF A CALL TO MINISTRY

Webster's Dictionary defines a mentor as "a wise and trusted teacher or counselor." Trust is the key element in any relationship. Most certainly, it is central to the relationship between a child and an adult, especially if that relationship involves teaching, counseling, and witnessing. The relationships between mentor and child, and also mentor and parent, are ones forged out of respect and service, not out of the needs or desires of the mentor.

Youth mentors are leaders in the Youth Ministries Program and so by extension are leaders in Trinity Church. Therefore, Youth Ministries must be seen as a well-functioning program within the systemic structure of the church. The participants in the leadership and development of Youth Ministries should be serious about young people and about Trinity Church. Being a youth mentor is also a gift. There is no question that the well being of the children in our care is our highest priority. There are many wonderful, graceful, fun moments that come from devoting time and love to children, especially teenagers!

The Purpose of a Youth Mentor

Being a mentor to youth at Trinity Church should first be something that is fun and brings great joy, to the mentor, to the children, and to God. Sometimes it helps to define what something is not. Mentorship is not just a place to hang out with teenagers, or meet other adults, or to have something to do on Friday night, although all of those things happen as the community of mentors develops trust and begins to grow from a common experience and ministry.

Mentorship grows out of the experience of living parish life for a period of time on several different levels, discovering gifts, engaging in discernment, and finally being prayerful and thoughtful about whether those gifts fit the mentorship role. Participation in the youth mentoring program is tantamount to a personal ministry. *We understand mentorship to be A CALL*, and as such, to be carefully considered and lived into. Service in this program is then a reflection of service to Christ, a means of fulfilling one's Baptismal Covenant, and bringing Christ's love into the world through ministry with young people.

Mentors create a safe environment specifically geared to a particular age group (Rite-13: grades 6&7; J2A: grades 8&9; or YAC: grades 10,11&12) and related activities (Christian Education Hour, Weekend Events, Acolytes, Service Projects, etc.) in which children may grow into community and learn from committed adults what it means to be members of the body of Christ.

The Characteristics of a Youth Mentor

As briefly mentioned above, the person who becomes a youth mentor should be someone who has spent at least six months in the parish. During that time, it is hoped that an individual will participate faithfully and responsibly in corporate worship. The spiritual formation of young people is something that happens in the midst of the community and each person in the parish is responsible for it. It is also hoped that an individual will volunteer time to ministries that he or she is interested in and learn about the specific rhythms of Trinity Church.

A youth mentor must demonstrate a commitment to Christ and to the principles of living in a Christian community. It is important that a youth mentor be willing to function as a role model, knowing that young people are watching every move he or she makes. Being able to model Christ and his teachings, while understanding that none of us are perfect, is an ability a mentor must demonstrate fully.

A youth mentor must be willing to try new ideas and explore new relationships, and must have a relaxed demeanor but a demanding heart. It is important that a mentor be open-minded and have high expectations and yet be able to trust the process and be flexible. Mentorship to teenagers requires a personality that is not easily shocked but is easily amused, a great deal of kindness, and emotional stability with a healthy dose of self-esteem. Teenagers say a lot of things that are meant to push the adults in their lives over their boundaries, so it is important that youth mentors be calm, loving and self-confident.

Most of all, youth mentors must endeavor always to care for the well being of the youth. Where is there loneliness and isolation? Where are problems becoming apparent? Where and how can the love of Jesus be revealed? Who needs to be reached out to? How can we help? What can we do to remind the youth that Jesus is never far away and that God loves them, and cares for them, deeply?

Youth Mentor Responsibilities

The following are the specific responsibilities required of a youth mentor at Trinity Church:

1. *Maintain a teen-focused ministry.* Youth Ministries at Trinity Church are just that: youth ministries. Mentors should be as focused as possible on putting the needs of our teenagers first and to acting as Christian role models for them at every possible moment.

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2. *Create a safe environment for the youth.* It is a mentor's responsibility to establish and lovingly enforce a covenant between youth as well as between youth and youth mentors, stressing that we should treat others with the respect and love we ourselves would want to receive. It is also the mentor's responsibility to adhere to personal boundaries and most importantly, to love and pray for the children in their care.
 3. *Time and training commitment.* Youth mentors agree to participate in (or lead) a minimum of two youth events per month (i.e., Sunday Christian Ed Hour, Friday nights, or Weekend events). Mentors will also agree to attend a monthly planning meeting with the other adult mentors in their group (the time and location to be worked out by the members of the mentor team). Mentors agree to remain in regular contact with the youth assigned to them (by calling and staying in touch with them on a monthly basis). Mentors agree to participate in the planning and execution of special events such as retreats and lock-ins as scheduled by your group. This agreement is for a one-year period. The Youth Ministry program follows the Journey to Adulthood curriculum of the Episcopal church, and is structured in three, two year blocks, Rite-13 (grades7&8), J2A (grades9&10) and YAC (Young Adults in the Church, grades11&12). It is recommended by the curriculum developers that youth mentors not follow their teens to each new two-year block so that they may learn to separate and grow in healthy directions with new and different leadership, and build relationships with different youth mentors. ***Mentors will also be required to complete sexual misconduct training and suicide awareness and prevention training.*** It is extremely important that a youth mentor demonstrate the ability to act in a responsible, reliable, dependable fashion in a youth leadership position.
 4. *Participate in monthly mentors team meetings and in mentor retreats.* The monthly team meetings of each mentor team are an essential part of the effective operation of each group. In order for these meetings to be effective, all team members need to be present for the meeting. Mentors are also strongly encouraged to attend the mentor retreats that are offered every year to empower, inspire, and equip the mentors of all three groups.
 5. *Work with other age group mentors.* It is very important that all youth mentors work together to plan and implement youth activities in accordance with the Journey to Adulthood curriculum. Embedded in the curriculum are weekly Christian education sessions, regular teen youth group gatherings, and special events that occur several times a year. In addition to these three modules, Trinity Church enjoys an active and ever-growing Acolyte Program. This is another area where teamwork can take place between youth leaders.
 6. *Assist in recruiting and retaining youth.* Youth mentors will stay in contact with the youth minister and the chair of their mentor team about how to be engaged in seeking out teens to enter the program and in tracking and following-up on "missing" teens (i.e., those who haven't been seen in a while). This will demonstrate love for them and reiterate their importance in the community.