

Parent Welcome Packet



“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

-Matthew 5:16



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Q&A

How does the Youth Minister normally communicate with parents?

I try to communicate with parents a number of ways. My primary way to communicate is through emails. However, I also communicate through our weekly church bulletin, social media (Instagram and Facebook), church app, and face-to-face meetings.

How do I sign my teenager up for a trip or event?

For all youth events, you will need to register on the church app or on our youth webpage at <https://leanderchurch.org/student-ministry>. For special trips, like Kadesh, Camp Beloved & Beyond, and Pine Springs Camp, you register online through the camp AND with our church, so we know who all has registered.

Do I need to fill out a Medical Release Form or a Consent Form for every trip or event?

The short answer is No! Once you fill it out, it is good for the remainder of your teenager's involvement in the youth group. However, if your medical insurance or anything else changes, then you will need to refill it out to address those changes. If your teen decides to bring a friend to any trip or event, then I will need the appropriate forms filled out for his/her friend.

My teenager wants to attend a lot of the events, but we cannot afford them all. Is there any financial assistance?

ABSOLUTELY! We have scholarships available for every youth event. Do not let the lack of money be the only reason your teen can't attend anything!

Welcome Letter

To the Parents and Volunteers of Lighthouse Student Ministries,

It is with a humble heart that I come before you to tell you how much of an honor it is to serve alongside of you. Youth Ministry has always been my passion and I want to see every teen commit his or her life to Christ. I look forward to working with you as you raise your child into a person of faith.

I deeply look forward to developing long lasting relationships with each and every one of you as time goes on. It is my understanding that many of you took over the youth ministry before I came here and I am very appreciative of the level of parental involvement this church has had in the past and I hope it continues as we reach out to our teens and community.

I firmly believe that the healthiest youth ministries have many parents and adults involved in their teenager's life. Spiritual formation takes place primarily at home with the parents as the primary guide for their child's spiritual wellbeing. We are taught in the Bible to teach our children the commandments of God in Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.

I greatly look forward in assisting you in any way I can, so please do not hesitate to call or come talk with me. If any of you have a problem, please let me know. I always try to establish clear lines of communication.

Thank you for your interest in serving with the Lighthouse Student Ministry and I hope and pray that whatever is done is for the Glory of God.

Your Brother in Christ,

Alan Gower
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Mission & Purpose Statements

Lighthouse Student Ministries exists to grow into a community of strong believers, rooted in God's love, whose lives are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ in hopes of strengthening each other to live the Christian lifestyle and to shine our light in the darkness.

Why "Lighthouse"?

Lighthouses were used primarily as a navigational aid to help ships find their way in the dark. Likewise, we are called to shine our light in the darkness to help each other navigate our way through life. Our theme verse comes from Matthew 5:16, which says, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

A Family-Based Youth Ministry

I believe in a family-based approach to youth ministry and encourage many levels of parental involvement. As a cohesive church, I believe it is necessary for teenagers to see those older than themselves living out their faith on a daily basis. Therefore, I try to incorporate anyone who wishes to be a part of the youth ministry, no matter how young or old you think you are. You have something valuable to teach these teenagers because you've been in their shoes before. So I would like to encourage you, as a parent, to get involved in the youth ministry!

Meeting Times

Location - Brick House

Bible Class - Sunday Morning at 9:30am

HUDDLES - Wednesday Nights from 6:45-8:00 during the school year



About the Youth Minister



My wife, Tracy, and I began serving the youth ministry at the Leander Church of Christ in March 2012. My passion for youth ministry began when I myself was in the youth group where I grew up in Allen, Texas. I had an extremely positive experience in my own youth group and it called me to pursue youth ministry as my vocation. I knew I wanted to reciprocate my same positive experience with other teenagers. So after I graduated from Allen High School in 2004, I enrolled at Abilene Christian University to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Youth and Family Ministry. After receiving my Bachelor's degree in 2008, I remained at ACU to work on the Master of Divinity degree and completed it in May 2011. After graduating with my Master's degree, I finally found the right fit here in Leander, Texas.

I met my wife, Tracy, during my sophomore year at ACU. In March 2006, I led a Spring Break Campaign to Trujillo, Honduras, in which Tracy signed on to go last minute. As we got to know each other throughout the week, we noticed there was something between the two of us, and sure enough, we were right! I proposed to her during my summer youth ministry internship in Tyler, Texas and we married on May 24, 2008 in her hometown of Fort Collins, Colorado. We have two children, Caleb and Shelby.

I enjoy spending my time with my family, including our dog, Penny. I also enjoy hunting, camping, fishing, playing disc golf, and watching movies. I enjoy many genres of movies, but my favorite genres would have to be action/adventure and comedies. I also enjoy many genres of music, including country, Christian, and modern alternative, and classic rock.

I was born in Tyler, Texas and lived in Whitehouse, Texas until I was around 7 years old. We then moved to Luling, Texas for a year and a half before settling in Allen, Texas just before my 4th grade year. I spent the rest of my formative years in Allen, attending the Greenville Oaks Church of Christ (originally the Allen Church of Christ), and going to Allen High School, where I played tuba in the band. I then moved to Abilene, Texas to attend ACU for 7 years to earn my Bachelor's degree in Youth & Family Ministry and Master of Divinity degree before moving to Leander, Texas.

The Leander Church of Christ has been a great fit for my family and myself and we look forward to serving the body of Christ in Leander for the foreseeable years to come!

Our Bible Initiative

Purpose

- Helps fulfill the church's vision of "Holding to the Word of God"
- Be more intentional about the Word of God and how we use it as a youth group
- Allows students to create a relationship with God's Word
- Teaches students good Bible study habits and note-taking skills
- More meaning for the student when he/she graduates
- Keeps students from becoming distracted by their phones

About the Bibles

- Every student church member in the youth group will receive a NIV Journal the Word Reference Bible for them to use throughout their duration in the youth group.
- Extra Bibles are placed in both the Middle School and High School rooms for visitors to use.
- The Bible has many useful features to add to the experience whenever they're used
 - Wide, lined margins for note-taking
 - Single-column cross-reference system
 - Thick paper for better note-taking

How it Works

- Each student has their own personal Bible with their name written on the inside page and their initials on a color-coded sticker placed on the spine. The colors represent each grade level (6th-12th).
- When new 6th graders or members enter the youth group, they will receive their own Bible, instead of waiting until they graduate.
- All Bibles will stay in the Brick House to be used during Sunday AM and Wednesday PM classes. The Bibles are to be used only in our youth group setting and are **NOT** meant to be taken home.
- For all youth trips away from the Brick House, each student's Bible will be packed into a tote and taken to each event (Soul Link, Retreats, Camps, etc)
- Each classroom has their own set of multi-colored highlighters and pens that don't smear or bleed through the pages.
- Once a student graduates from High School, the Bible will be presented to them with their name imprinted on the cover on Senior Sunday. It will then become theirs to keep as a memento from their time in the youth group.
- It is expected for the students to use these Bibles while they're in the youth group. The more they use it, the more meaning it will have after they graduate. Of course, if they want to use another Bible (other than the one on their mobile device), that's fine too.

Youth Ministry Programs

Summer Events

Kadesh ~ Abilene Christian University offers this camp for students in High School. For one week during the summer, students have the opportunity to attend this amazing camp in which they grow closer to one another and God. Kadesh offers age-appropriate lessons in a small group setting to help lead teens into spiritual transformation.

Camp Beloved & Beyond Mission Trip ~ Camp B&B is a camp for children with disabilities and special needs, mostly different forms of autism or downs syndrome and disorders like cerebral palsy or spina bifida. Our teens aged 13-14 do general service during the camp. Those aged 15 are Junior Buddies, and if you're 16+ years old, you're a Buddy and are paired one-on-one with a camper for the week. Adults and parents are encouraged to attend too! Their job is to be a cabin parent.

Honduras Mission Trip ~ Every other summer, the Juniors and Seniors have an opportunity to travel to Trujillo, Honduras to serve with the Little Hands, Big Hearts organization. The trip lasts 10-12 days and provides students with the opportunity to increase their Christian worldview and to serve alongside the Christians in Honduras.

Mystery Road Trip ~ Every other summer (the non Honduras trip year), we take a Mystery Road Trip to a destination unknown to the students. This is a long weekend filled with mystery and fun. Our summer intern helps plan and lead this trip, including our theme and daily lessons.

Events During the School Year

Retreats ~ We have two retreats every year in the Fall and Spring at Camp Hensel. These retreats are designed for the teens to unplug from the business of their world and focus on growing closer to one another and God. These retreats provide a balance of Bible Study and fun.

Encounter LE ~ Every weekend before Thanksgiving, we travel to LCU for a "Lite Edition" of their summer camp, Encounter. We gather with up to 2,000 other teens to worship, attend various classes, and hang out.

Soul Link ~ A weekend trip every year to Houston, TX where we meet and gather with youth groups.

Banquets ~ Each year we have two banquets: the Sweetheart Banquet (honoring the older members in our church family) and the Senior Banquet (honoring the graduating High School seniors).

Parties & Devotionals ~ We try to get together as often as possible. So we have parties commemorating the beginning or end of the school year, holidays, and more. Each party is accompanied with a time of worship and a devotional.

Various Trips ~ We have various trips throughout the year that are designed to be just for fun and to encourage teens to bring their friends.

Youth Ministry Volunteer Commitment

What We Offer You

- The joy of working with Christ to evangelize teens
- Fellowship with other Team Members
- Training in teaching, ministry, public speaking, how to relate to teens, lesson planning, trip/event planning, and much more!
- The opportunity to lead teens in their spiritual development
- Access to resources such as books and videos
- The opportunity to go on various trips such as Mission Trips, ACU Camps, Retreats, Youth Conferences, and more!
- The opportunity to discover and develop your spiritual gifts and talents
- A voice in the planning, shaping, and development of the Lighthouse Student Ministries
- The opportunity to witness young lives transformed by the Gospel
- The opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with teens
- Most importantly . . . Pizza

What We Ask of You

Training & Interaction

- Strive to grow as a minister
- Support and encourage other Team members
- Be active and involved in youth group events
- Help create an environment of love, acceptance, and depth
- Go out of your way or comfort zone to talk to youth, especially the loners.

Spiritual Life

- Deep love for God and youth
- Attend worship and class regularly
- Regular life of prayer
- Strive for holiness
- Continued spiritual growth

Attendance

- Commit to regularly attend and participate in youth events
- Attend all meetings, big events, and at least one non-youth group related youth event (football game, school play, etc.) per semester
- Have good communication with Alan and other team members

Resources for Parents

It is my hope to partner with parents to be a resource to go to when you have questions about teenagers or when your teen is going through a difficult time. This page lists out a few resources that you might find helpful. I own every book listed on this sheet (and many more), so if you would like to check one out, please do not hesitate to ask for it. It is there for your use!

Books

General Parenting:

- Burns, Jim. *Confident Parenting*.
- Burns, Jim. *Teen-ology: The Art of Raising Great Teenagers*.
- Burns, Jim. *Understanding Your Teen: Shaping Their Character, Facing Their Realities*.
- Hughes, Amanda Millay. *Lost and Found: Adolescence, Parenting, and the Formation of Faith*.
- Pettit, Paul. *Congratulations, You've Got Tweens!: Preparing Your Child for Adolescence*.
- Thompson, Marjorie. *Family, the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation*.

Teenagers in Crisis:

- Clark, Chap. *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*
- Clark, Chap & Steve Rabey. *When Kids Hurt: Help for Adults Navigating the Adolescent Maze*.
- Elkind, David. *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*

Understanding Adolescence & Youth Culture:

- Mueller, Walt. *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture: Bridging Teen Worldviews and Christian Truth*.

Parenting Guides:

- Matlock, Mark and Christopher Lyon. *Ideas for Parents: A Collection of Tips, Insights, and Activities for Real-World Parenting*.
- Oestreicher, Mark. *A Parent's Guide to Understanding Social Media: Helping Your Teenager Navigate Life Online*.

Teaching Teenagers:

- Fields, Doug, & Duffy Robbins. *Speaking To Teenagers: How to Think About, Create, & Deliver Effective Messages*.
- Heflin, Houston. *Teaching Eutychus: Engaging Today's Learners with Passion and Creativity*.

Parenting in a Media Filled Age:

- Boyd, Danah. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*.
- Crouch, Andy. *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in its Proper Place*.
- DeGaetano, Gloria. *Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human*.
- Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.
- Tefler, Phillip. *Media Choices: Convictions or Compromise?*
- Twenge, Jean M, PhD. *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy - and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*.

Online Resources

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| • www.parentingteenonline.com | • http://www.teen-drug-abuse.org |
| • www.parentingateenager.net | • http://teenresources.student.com/wiki/ |
| • www.focusonthefamily.com | • http://www.parenteen.com |
| • www.parentingministry.org | • http://cpyu.org |