

**Youth Group Report to the 2023 Annual Parish Assembly**  
**Priest Gregory Joyce**  
**March 10, 2024**

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Our goal for our Youth Groups has been to **meet at least once per month for spiritually profitable activities that may include both direct acts of service to those in need, but may also include simply strengthening the bonds between our parish youth peers.** Our children will always have friends outside the parish and outside the faith, but it is the friends that share your faith and moral values which are the ones you want to keep close – the friends that will be with you for a lifetime. Thus, we have a two-pronged approach to our youth activities:

1. Allow the young people to interact positively to strengthen their bonds of friendship
2. Allow the young people to actively live their faith

**The need to live one's faith actively rather than just hold it philosophically or abstractly is felt strongly by the youth, and thus we must provide them opportunities to act on their faith, to truly emulate Christ in their lives.**

It is also important that we provide opportunities for our young people to actively engage in their faith as regularly as possible. **Involvement promotes persistence and in this case this means continued participation in spiritual life.** We provide opportunities for our young men to serve in the altar. We provide opportunities for our young ladies to ring the bells, although this has fallen off in the last years and we need to reinvigorate this opportunity. We provide opportunities for those who can sing to participate in the choir, and the youth choir makes such participation even easier for our young singers – this also needs to be reinvigorated. ALL of our young people are invited to participate actively and regularly in one of these in-church activities in addition to participating in youth group activities outside the Divine Services.

I would like to thank all those who help with our Youth Group activities and urge you all to help however you can. Please contact me for more information.

Finally, I would like to make it clear that the opportunities the Youth Group provides are not the end, but the beginning of a process. **The Youth Group can build a foundation of faith and action for our young people, but if the parents do not build on that foundation by facilitating their young people's participation in prayer at home, the Divine Services in the Church, and the truly distinguishing characteristic of Orthodox spiritual life: SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE, then the foundation will remain bare, that is, not built upon.** We strongly urge all our parents to see to it that their young people live an active spiritual life so that they will grow up and remain in the Church and become the next generation of leaders of the Church in this world, and with God's help the next generation of saints in the next world. Let us be very clear: **we are striving in this life for transfiguration – for sainthood – allowing our young people (or any of us) to strive for less is wasting the time that the merciful Lord has given us in this life to prepare for the next.** May the Lord guide us and help all us in this important ministry!

Are there any questions?