Setting up a small faith-based youth group in a church – a set by step guide

It can be a real challenge to set up a new youth group in a church, especially post Covid and if there are only a handful of young people. It can also be a bit of challenge to find people who are willing to help as working with teenagers, as some view it as harder than working with children. So here is a simple a step-by-step guide to help get you started.

Step 1: Pray

* Spend time praying for the young people in your area / parish /church / local school.
* Invite God to speak into any hopes, thoughts, plans or expectations, asking God to bring-to-mind a few people who might be willing to help.

Step 2: Consider

* Why do you want to set up a faith-based youth group?
* Have you spoken to any young people and parents / carers?
* Are the PCC / Church Council and the incumbent behind this?
* How might the youth group grow in faith and connect with the church?
* What might need to change at your church to accommodate a new youth group?
* Might you need to partner with others to make it possible?
* What policies and support will you need in place to run the group / activities safely?
* What resources might you require?
* Are there any people who are willing to help?
* What might success look like?

Step 3: Consult

Identify a small group of young people to have a conversation with about the possibility of setting up a new youth group. Ideally young people you are aiming for. You could ask them:

* Is this is a good idea and why?
* Where and when might be the best place for a youth group to meet / take place?
* Who should the youth group be aimed at?
* What sort of things / activities would they like to do?
* How can the youth group connect with the church?

Below is a sheet that can be used to help in a conversation with young people. A chat with young people may help to inform what a youth group might look like, what might happen and what resources might be required.

Step 4: Agree

If the young people think it is a good idea, the next step is to speak to the PCC / church council for discussion, scrutiny and agreement. After discussing it with the young people and hearing what they have to say, you will have a better picture of what you are asking the PCC / church council to support, resource and possibly finance. It can be really powerful to take some of the young people to the PCC / church council meeting to present their ideas.



**The Church is thinking about setting up a new youth group, what do you think? Have an open discussion with a group of young people using the question on the tree as a guide, they can write their thoughts and ideas on the sheet next to each question.**

**How often could it happen and where?**

**Explain to the young people that you might not be able to practically do all they have suggested, but you will take all their ideas into consideration, and plan accordingly.**

**What sort of things might they like to do?**

**Who should the group be for / aimed at?**

**In what ways could the youth group connect with faith and the church?**

**Is this a good idea? Why?**

Step 5: Team

The next step is to grow a small team, ideally a team of 4-5 volunteers who might be able to commit to joining a rota. All volunteers will need to be safely recruited in line with the Diocesan safeguarding policy and do the basic online safeguarding training modules. Some volunteers may require additional training.

Here are a few tips for recruiting volunteers:

* Pray for volunteers to join and keep praying for them when they are on the team.
* You can appeal for volunteers, but you are better off approaching people personally.
* Be prepared to work with others as this may widen the pool of resources and people.
* Be clear about roles, responsibilities, expectations and commitment.
* Be open to volunteers that you might not initially consider, as they may surprise you.
* Make it easy for volunteers to come on board, offer taster sessions to see if they fit.
* It is good to have a good gender mix of volunteers.
* Look for leaders and helpers as you will need both.
* Offer training so volunteers feel more confident, this also helps to build team.
* Ask for a year commitment, with the option to leave, if it is not working.

Once your team is in place, you can start to plan and pray.

Step 6: Policies

One of the biggest hurdles in setting up a new youth group can be all the policies, risk assessments and other paperwork required. To make this easier, the Go Team and the Diocesan Safeguarding team provide sample policies and paperwork that can be adapted appropriately for your youth group. These are all available via the Diocesan website.

Step 7: Plan

With all the above in place you should now be ready to plan and prepare the first programme and agree a date to start. Remember to include the young people in your planning. Be prepared to start small, once a month is good as it allows space to grow. Also, volunteers might be more willing to help once a month. A typical church-based youth group might include things such as:

* Socials - opportunities to hang-out with friends and have fun.
* Discussion - space to discuss issues of life, the world, faith and God using the Bible.
* Worship - times of prayer or worship, or attending worship services / events together.
* Service - chance to put faith into action through social action projects.

If the youth group did one of the above activities per month (in any order) this would be easy to plan (especially if the young people help with the planning), and you are only making a commitment to 12 activities a year. Below is a sample annual / termly program based on a session once a month.

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| Annual / termly programme(Sample - based on a session once a month)Programmes and forms can be downloaded from church website |
| All activities and trips as stated on this program are for Insert name of church youth group. Parents / careers will need to complete an annual consent form for each young person taking part in this group. Please note: any activities taking place are beyond a 50-mile radius of Insert name of church , or in a residential capacity, require separate consent.  |
| Term 1 | Date | Times | Activity | Additional information  |
| Social | Fri ? Jan  | 19.00 – 20.30 | Bowling | Bowlplex, cost £5.00 per person, parents drop off and pick up |
| Discuss | Sun ? Feb  | 19.00 – 20.30 | Bible study using the LecDeck | At church hall, with pizza and soft drinks |
| Worship | Sun ? Mar  | 10.30 – 11.30 | All age worship service | At St Church, youth doing prayers / intersessions in service |
| Serve | Thurs ? Apr  | 18.30 – 19.30 | Sandwich making for homeless | At church hall kitchen, then drop sandwiches off to soup run |
| Term 2 | Date | Times | Activity | Additional information  |
| Social | Fri ? May  | 19.00 – 20.30 | Games at the church hall/park | Wet option in hall / dry option park, parents drop off and pick up |
| Discuss | Sun ? June  | 19.00 – 20.30 | Bible study using the LecDeck | At church hall, with pizza and soft drinks |
| Worship | Sun ? July  | 18.00 – 21.00 | Movement worship night (venue tbc) | Meet at St Church at 17.30, transport to Movement provided  |
| Serve | Sat ? Aug  | 10.00 – 11.00 | Litter pick around the church | We provide bags and litter pickers and gloves |
| Term 3 | Date | Times | Activity | Additional information  |
| Social | Fri ? Sept  | 19.00 – 20.30 | Camp fire in the woods | Wear warm clothes, outdoor shoes / boots and bring a coat |
| Discuss | Sun ? Oct  | 19.00 – 20.30 | Bible study using the LecDeck | At church hall, with pizza and soft drinks |
| Worship | Sat ? Nov  | 18.00 – 21.00 | Movement worship night (venue tbc) | Meet at St Church at 17.30, transport to Movement provided  |
| Serve | Sun ? Dec  | 15.30 – 16.30 | Carols at elderly people’s care home | Parents drop off and pick up, song sheets provided |

Step 8: Review

Review how the youth group is going termly, including the young people in any discussions.

The Diocese Go Team can provide a range of support and resources. For any further advice or help, contact your Archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser:

* Cheryl Govier/Ruth Slade, Wells Archdeaconry. Call 07848 028620 or email cheryl.govier@bathwells.anglican.org / ruth.slade@bathwells.anglican.oer
* Andy Levett, Taunton Archdeaconry. Call 07922 576756 or email andy.levett@bathwells.anglican.org
* Tony Cook, Bath Archdeaconry. Call 07922 576757 or email tony.cook@bathwells.anglican.org

Or visit the Youth and Children’s section on the website: [bathandwells.org.uk/children-young-people](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/)

Revised December 2022.