

How to...

...set up a faith-based youth group



It can be a real challenge to set up a new youth group in a church, especially if there are only a handful of young people. It can also be a bit of a challenge to find enough of the right volunteers to run the group, and occasionally finding a suitable venue might be an issue.

Here is a simple step-by-step guide to help you get started.

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 form a team.



2. Consider

Gather a team together and consider the following questions:

- Why do you want to set up a faith-based youth group?
- Have you spoken to any young people and their parents/carers?
- Are the PCC/Church leadership 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?
- Who might you need to partner with to make the youth group a success?
- What policies and support will you need in place to run the group/activities safely?
- What resources might you need?
- Are there any more people you could get involved?
- What will a successful group look like?



3. Consult

Identify a group of young people and hold a conversation about the possibility of setting up a new youth group. Ideally the young people you choose will be the target audience for the group.

Here's some questions you could ask them:

- Would a new youth group be a good idea? Why?
- Where and when should a group meet?
- Who might want to come to the youth group?
- What sort of activities or sessions would you enjoy?
- How can the youth group connect with the church?



Attached is a sheet which can be used to help guide your conversation with young people. You may also want to have a separate conversation with parents/carers to find out their thoughts and opinions.

4. Agree

If the young people think it is a good idea, your next step is to create a proposal (detailing who, where, why, what and when) to take to your church leadership/PCC for discussion/scrutiny, and hopefully agreement.



After discussing the new group with young people and their parents/carers, you will have a better idea of what you will need in terms of finances, resources, time and volunteers.

If appropriate, you may want to involve the young people in creating and presenting the proposal to the PCC.

5. Team



The next step is to develop a small team, ideally 4-5 volunteers who might be able to commit to joining a rota. All volunteers will need to be safely recruited in line with Diocesan safeguarding policy, have an up to date (within 3 years) DBS certificate, and have completed the basic and foundation online safeguarding training. At least one leader will need to have done leadership level safeguarding training.

Here are a few tips for recruiting volunteers:

- Pray for volunteers to join the team, and continue to pray when they are on the team.
- Appeal for volunteers from the wider church, but consider personal invitations to chosen individuals.
- Write a volunteer job description, and be clear about roles, responsibilities, expectations and commitment required.
- Be open to volunteers you might not necessarily expect, they may surprise you!
- Make it easy for volunteers to come on board, offer taster sessions so they can see what it's like before committing.
- Ensure you have a mix of genders and ages on your team, everyone will bring their own skills and experience.
- Organise training and team building so volunteers feel more confident and part of the team.
- Ask for a year commitment initially, then review how things are going with each volunteer.



6. Policies and Processes

On the Diocese of Bath and Wells website, there are a whole range of documents you may find useful. Volunteer job descriptions, consent forms, program examples, good practice guide, risk assessment, behaviour policy, accident form and incident form to help you.

If you need anything that's not there, feel free to contact your local Go Team adviser. Scan the QR code or visit www.bathandwells.org.uk/children-young-people/resources.



7. Plan

With all the above in place, you should now be ready to plan and prepare your first programme and agree a date to start. Remember to include the young people (and their parents where appropriate) in your planning. Be prepared to start small. Consider starting off meeting once a month, as young people and volunteers may find it easier to commit to this than weekly.



A typical church-based youth group might include some of the following:

- Socials - opportunities to hang out with friends and have fun
- Discussion - space to discuss life issues, school, the world, faith and God. This is a great opportunity to include the Bible and encourage the young people to grow in faith.
- Worship - times of prayer or singing together, attending worship services or events together.
- Service - a chance to put their faith into action by serving others, either during church services or in social action projects.

If you planned one of each of the above activities once a month, you could easily produce a year's worth of planning. You may also want to consider using existing material to help your group study the Bible together. Scan the QR code to visit our Linktree, where we have compiled a list of useful resources for youth work. <https://linktr.ee/YouthWorkResources>

