

Youth in Church (Elementary)

The Church has no right to baptize children if we do not honor our responsibility to support their parents in forming them in Christian faith and life. The Executive Committee takes this responsibility seriously, even as we understand the limitations on our size and resources at St. Thomas'. It is tricky. Sometimes we will not see any children for weeks, and then we will have four suddenly appear and wish to be part of the service. They are, after all, at the mercy of parents for transportation.

St. Thomas has youth in the 3rd - 6th grade... a little too old (and bored) for "Sunday School," but not yet the age for the sorts of activity expected of a "youth group." So, rather than being

"sent off" during the Liturgy of the Word, these youth are in church during the 10am principle Eucharist. They work under the supervision of Fr. Doc and numerous other adult mentors. They are expected to acolyte, help usher and present alms, assist the altar guild, perhaps read, lead prayers, or otherwise minister within the liturgy. They learn the use of the *Bible*, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the *Hymnal*. They might help an adult mentor with pastoral visitation of elderly or shut-in members. They can assume duties as their age and skill increase. They will become comfortable with the mysteries of the church from the choir loft to the sacristy. (At times, after a very quick raid on the coffee hour food table) they can meet together back in the nave after the service for about 20 minutes, for instruction and discussion about their duties, observations, and questions.



Our hope is for our youth-- and their mentors-- to learn and grow as an inter-generational Christian community over time, and to receive the grace and fellowship to sustain them for the changes and challenges ahead. It takes a village to gracefully grow up-- and to grow old.

Further Reading:

- 1) USA Today: [Has the sun set on Sunday school?](#)
- 2) [For a look at what is possible: see this video from friends in the Diocese of West Texas](#)
- 3) [Christian Century, Is Youth Ministry Killing the Church?](#)
- 4) [Does Sunday School Have a Future?](#)