

Introduction for Parents

Welcome to Journey to Adulthood! This brief introduction describes the basic outline and content of our youth program, and your role in making this a space for meaningful spiritual and personal growth in the life of your child.

The most notable feature of the Journey to Adulthood program is its cohort model. In many youth programs, children are grouped by age or grade level (say, middle school and high school) and they move up over time. In most Journey to Adulthood programs, youth are grouped in two-year cohorts, and they stay with that same cohort for all six years (though the leaders may change every two years). The first two-year cycle is called Rite 13, the second is called J2A, and the third is called 4WARD. By being with the same peers through the program, the hope is that there is time for deepening relationships and trust. It also helps ensure everyone is on the same page and is encountering material for the first time together.

Each two-year level has lessons grouped under the themes of Spirituality, Society, and Self, which delve deeply into Jesus's call to his disciples to love God and love their neighbors as themselves. Youth explore these themes in age-appropriate ways from a variety of angles, through discussion, Bible study, games, crafts, and the occasional off-site trip or service project.

The most important adult in your child's life is you. Journey to Adulthood does not seek to change that. The leaders in the program aim to come alongside you and provide instruction, guidance, and a listening ear. At times, you may be invited to join in the program, perhaps for a meal or a presentation. This will especially be true for the Rite 13 Ceremony, and in preparations for the pilgrimage at the conclusion of the J2A level, which combines a physical trip with a spiritual journey.

This program gives your child space to explore questions of faith rather than a set of right answers. The resources of the Christian tradition—the Scriptures, the Creeds, the lives of the saints, and more—serve as clear guides for us on the way. Yet we know that Christian faith from its earliest days has been marked by diversity and that the Spirit of God calls each of us to unique roles in Christ's Church. Be sure to stay connected to what your child is learning in Journey to Adulthood and take

opportunities to talk with them about what faith means for you. If you ever have questions or concerns, please seek out youth leaders or clergy to discuss.

As youth enter Rite 13, many will hold to a largely “what we believe” sort of faith, depending on what their family and friends profess. By the time they finish 4WARD, most will have deepened this understanding of the “we believe” while having the opportunity to hone a “what I believe” sort of faith as well. Such a faith is aware of and honors what those around them believe while having the courage and resources to differ, to doubt, and to declare otherwise. Christian faith is always a combination of what we hold as a community and what we hold individually.

It is our hope that Journey to Adulthood provides for faithful inquiry, as youth explore what Christians believe and what it means for them to belong to the Body of Christ, as they are given the opportunity and the tools necessary to make faith their own.