

# The Ascension Weekly

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October 1, 2017

## Ascension's youth group kicks off with high hopes for the year ahead!

A potential Ultimate Frisbee tournament in November, a Catholic youth retreat at Mount 2000 in Emmitsburg, MD, upcoming trips to local amusement parks, and the Youth Rally and Mass for Life at the Verizon Center in January—these are some of the many ideas that emerged during the Youth Group's Fall Kick Off Night on Tuesday, September 19th. For the fourteen high school aged teens who showed up, it was a fun and relaxing evening hanging out in the St. Michael's youth room and getting to know the new youth minister, Kristen Bryant, and each other. They enjoyed free pizza, played games and discussed upcoming meetings and possible activities. A former member of ACT (Ascension Catholic Teens), which was a youth group that was active at Ascension several years ago, stopped by and offered additional ideas – like collaboratively painting and redecorating the St. Michael's Youth Group room.

For Kristen, the new youth minister, one of the primary goals of the youth group this year is to be a help to the teens who attend in nurturing their faith and keeping it an active force in their lives. She explains, "I think it is extremely challenging especially nowadays as a young person to stay connected in and develop their faith. There are so many influences out there in the culture and in the school environment that can cause confusion and doubt or even just a general drifting away from the Catholic beliefs we grew up with. I hope that this youth group is a place that can be a counter to that. I'd like it to be a place where teens who want to stay strong in their faith can find others who are like-minded, where they can find people to rely on and confide in, who will forgive you when you fall and help you get up and move forward in and for Christ."

That is something Kristen wishes she herself had when she was a teenager. She grew up as one of five children, and the second oldest of 25 grandchildren, all residents of Bowie. Although she grew up going to Mass with her

family and attending Religious Education classes at her parish, she found herself drifting from her faith in her high school and college years. After graduating from college and taking on a government job in Washington, D.C., she eventually began to recognize a nagging spiritual hunger in her soul, and after a while she felt herself being drawn back to the faith of her childhood. She began praying and asking God for direction in her life. At a certain point she realized there was so much about her faith that she did not know. "As I was coming back to the faith," she notes with a laugh, "I did not even know how to pray the rosary!" Seeking to fill her growing desire for God and the faith, she volunteered to help out at Sacred Heart in Bowie as an assistant youth minister. "It was there that I felt my soul nourished and revitalized through the fellowship and the shared passion for the faith I encountered in the weekly Bible study that the youth minister led, and in the teens who came to it each week."

It is that experience that she wants to provide for the teens at Ascension. "I want to help teach these kids what I wasn't taught in high school. I want to stress the importance of their faith and the need to lean on each other during this journey because it's not easy in this 'post-Christian' world, as it has been called. My hope is that through the truths of faith they learn and the friendships they forge in youth group, these teens will be able to stand strong and love their faith and live it in their daily lives. They will be able to develop a deep and lasting relationship with the risen Savior, and encounter His love."

So, to all teens at Ascension in grades 9 through 12, Kristen urges: "Please come! We would love for you to join us. Meetings are on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm in the St. Michael room of the Religious Education building."

***Editor's Note: Kristen's email address is [ascensionbowievg@gmail.com](mailto:ascensionbowievg@gmail.com). The day of the weekly meetings may soon change to Wednesdays; watch the bulletin for updates.***