

Youth Ministry Vision GOYA: Middle & High School

Purpose: *GOYA exists to develop Orthodox Christian faith, life, and friendship in and among parish youth by engaging them in fun and meaningful experiences.*

Envisioned Future:

By the grace of God, the middle and high school youth group (GOYA) of Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church will create and sustain a culture of *philotimo*—gratitude and devotion to God, love for each other (fellowship, hospitality to guests), and service (both to the Church as the body of Christ and to the surrounding world)—as well as youth leadership. Our average weekly size will be 15-20% of Sunday attendance. The best of our former participants will have become advisers.

Youth will experience GOYA as an enthusiastic and joyful, warm and friendly, refreshing and comforting group. Because they will be greeted warmly and genuinely, guests will want to come back next week, and some non-Orthodox friends will begin to attend GOYA meetings regularly. Upon this foundation, GOYA will become a truly meaningful experience, capable of inspiring thankfulness, humility, repentance, and self-examination among its members. Youth will be thankful for GOYA and feel special to be a part of it. Some will not be able to imagine their lives without it.

Parents will come to know GOYA as a time to which their children look forward and from which they return more awake and alive than they were before. Parents will feel a good connection with youth ministry team members, whom they regard as partners in raising their children according to Orthodox Christian principles and practices. Parents will be able to say that GOYA has made a noticeable, positive difference in the lives of their children.

Youth ministry team members (parents, young adults, and—hopefully—the elderly) will contribute an abundance of ideas for the operation of GOYA and whatever time their other commitments permit them to offer to turning those ideas into realities, especially by coaching and guiding youth leaders in accomplishing these activities. Youth ministry team members will begin to spend time with youth, especially with leaders and those with special needs, in small groups or one-on-one in safe, appropriate public settings. Ministry team members will help these youth connect with the parish priest, who will pastorally support parish youth ministry with his experience and sacramental care. As their involvement in youth ministry grows, team members will be enthused and gratified by more substantial relationships with parish youth and by seeing the results of their co-working with God. They will be able and eager to tell stories of how their involvement in the lives of youth has enriched and energized them.

In the parish, GOYA will be known as a group that serves unselfishly and inspires with its spirit of *philotimo*. The GOYA of Holy Transfiguration will come to be known as a friendly, “non-cliquey”, welcoming youth group. Other parishes will say that no other youth group has made a better attempt to get to know them, and they will be inspired by the character and activities of the youth of Holy Transfiguration—by their wisdom, joy, maturity, attentiveness, friendliness, and service.

In coming years, the lead steward of GOYA will work more behind the scenes with volunteer advisers and youth leaders, who will take more prominent roles in meetings. He will focus more on relationships than on the execution of the program and will have cultivated a successor. Other team members will be more involved in the operation of the program, inspiring a more robust exchange of ideas, and will become excellent in the practice of youth ministry. As a team, we will continue to learn from others’ experiences and the knowledge of youth ministry experts. “Mount Everest” goal: We will host a youth leadership summit for adults and youth from the central conference of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta.