



YOUTH MINISTRY CERTIFICATION

2026-2027 Cohort #4

This program is designed for ministerial staff and lay leaders of the Youth Ministry of a church who have a passion for ministry but have no formal education on the basics of ministry. These certification courses equip the ministry leader to meet the needs of teenagers, teachers and parents through events, training events and outreach opportunities.

Details and Requirements

- Our 2026-27 cohort will be limited to 15 students.
- Cost is \$500 for the year or 2 payments of \$250 (August & January).
- Monthly meetings from August - May. To foster community and high engagement, **all participants are expected to remain online and on camera for the duration of each meeting** (excluding breaks). You may miss a maximum of two meetings; any missed meetings will need to be made up by watching a replay of the Google Meet meeting.
- Texts, reading and written reports will be required throughout the course along with written summaries of each session.
- Sessions will be led by Kurt Krodle (Youth Ministry Specialist) with special guests each month.

Dates

Unless otherwise noted, all classes will take place via Google Meet from 9:00AM-3:00PM (CST) with a 1 hour break for lunch (12:00PM-1:00PM).

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| • August 20, 2026 | • February 25, 2027 |
| • September 24, 2026 | • NO MARCH SESSION |
| • October 5-6, 2026 (Conclave NextGen) | • April 12-14, 2027 (Youth Ministers Retreat) |
| • November 5, 2026 | • May 6, 2027 |
| • December 10, 2026 | |
| • January 21, 2027 | |

Assignments

Each time we meet you will have 3 different assignments:

1. Book Review – You'll write a 2-3 page reflection on each book, highlighting its central ideas, what challenged or encouraged you, and how you plan to apply those principles in your current and/or future ministry.
2. Ongoing Book Review – We will be reading two books (*The Emotionally Healthy Leader* & *Lead Them to Jesus*) throughout the cohort.
You will write: 2-3 sentences for each chapter of the book **and** one ministry takeaway or application for the entire reading. These reviews are due each month.
3. Session Review – Using the notes you will take from the previous session, you will submit a 1-2 page report of the most helpful insights from the previous Google Meet. This could be an overview of the discussion we had OR it could be an action step you would like to integrate after the previous lesson.
For example, on September 24 you will turn in a session review of our opening Google Meet gathering on August 20. This is why it's so vital to keep notes throughout the day.

All assignments will be emailed to caitlin.merriman@txb.org. While you won't receive a letter grade for content, assignments will be checked for completion. Because this is a cohort-based program, turning in reviews on time is vital so we can process them together. If you need an extension, please email Kurt or Caitlin in advance.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Written Assignments

The purpose of the Youth Ministry Certification is not simply to complete assignments, but to develop as a follower of Christ and as a youth ministry leader. The book reviews, session reviews, and ongoing summaries are intended to help you process what you are learning, reflect on your own ministry context, and consider how these principles will shape your leadership now and in the future. Because of this, **all written assignments should reflect your own reading, thinking, and ministry experience.**

Students **should not use** artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or similar platforms) to:

- **Generate** text or outlines for assignments.
- **Rewrite** or substantially edit your thoughts.

While AI can be a helpful tool in many ministry settings, these assignments are designed to capture your own voice, insights, and personal reflection—not the polished output of a computer. We are far more interested in authentic, thoughtful engagement than in perfectly written papers. If there is ever a question about whether a particular use of AI is appropriate, please ask before submitting your assignment.

Youth Ministry Certification Sessions

- **SESSION 1**

Philosophy of Youth Ministry - August 20, 2026

Why do churches invest in youth ministry? What is the best way to start in youth ministry? We'll answer these questions and many more as we take a closer look at discovering your personal philosophy of youth ministry.

Book Requirement: 1. McGarry, Mike. (2021). *Lead them to Jesus: A Handbook for Youth Workers*. New Growth Press.

Lead Them To Jesus – Intro, Starting Point (pages 1-8)

- **SESSION 2**

Teaching Teenagers the Bible through Small Groups – September 24, 2026

Teaching students starts with the right Bible study leader who is called to lead teenagers. There are various learning styles you can implement to help create a more effective environment. We will discuss various options to optimize learning during a small group Bible study.

Book Requirement:

Blanks, Andy. (2012). *The 7 Best Practices for Teaching Teenagers the Bible*. Birmingham, AL: youthministry360.com. (Entire book)

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 18-20
Emotionally Healthy Leader - Intro and Chapter 1

- **SESSION 3**

Conclave NextGen 2026 - October 5-6, 2026

First Baptist Bryan

Registration to Conclave NextGen is included in your Certification cost. We will give you registration information during Session 1.

- **SESSION 4**

Leading Volunteer Leaders - November 5, 2026

Recruiting, training and empowering adults is a vital skill in leading youth ministry. We will discuss some proven techniques to build a framework that will help volunteer leaders onboard into your ministry.

Book Requirement:

Blevins, Nick. (2023). The Volunteer Playbook: A proven framework to help your church recruit, train and empower more volunteers. Volunteerplaybook.com . (Entire book)

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 21-23

Emotionally Healthy Leader - Chapters 2 & 3

- **SESSION 5**

Family/Parent Ministry – December 10, 2026

Family Ministry isn't just an 'add-on' to youth ministry. The work of reaching & serving parents should be woven through everything happening in a church's youth ministry. This session will address the different models of family ministry so you can implement the best method in your church context.

Book Requirement:

Higgins, Chad & Workun, Zac. (2025) Define the Relationship: Growing a Parent Ministry that Brings Families and Churches Together. Nashville, TN: Lifeway Christian Resources. (Entire book)

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 24-26

Emotionally Healthy Leader - Chapter 4

- **SESSION 6**

Event Planning 101 – January 21, 2027

Camp, D-Now, Retreats, and Mission Trips are just a few of the events that happen during a calendar year for a youth ministry. There are some tools that can help any church leader navigate these events to help you work smarter and not harder. How you protect students, youth leaders and your church is also an important part that we will consider.

Book Requirement:

Dean, Jody. (2024). Protect: A Youth Worker's Guide to Navigating Risk. Birmingham, AL: youthministry360.com . (Entire book)

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 27-29

Emotionally Healthy Leader – Chapter 5

- **SESSION 7**

**Communication and Navigating Relationships in Youth Ministry
– February 25, 2027**

Leading youth ministry in the local church can feel isolating but it doesn't have to be. Youth leaders have more influence than they realize when it comes to building relationships with other individuals and ministries in the church. The youth ministry should exist to serve the church and not as a parachurch organization looking from the outside in.

Book Requirement:

Scroggins, Clay. (2017). How to Lead When You're Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. (Entire book)

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 30-32

Emotionally Healthy Leader – Chapter 6

- **SESSION 8**

Youth Ministers Retreat - April 12-14, 2027

Highland Lakes Camp & Conference Center

Registration to the Youth Ministers Retreat is not included in your Certification cost. We will give you registration information once retreat registration is open.

Student Leadership & Calling out the Called

Youth ministry has the unique opportunity to enlist teenagers to help serve in their own ministry. There are some effective ways to help empower these students as they begin their leadership journey. Some of these students will be our future church leaders, ministers and pastors. We will discuss how to encourage those sensing God's call to ministry and how to pursue that calling.

Book Requirement:

Franklin, Doug. (2010). Student Leaders Start Here; Assessments & Tools to Help You Grow as a Leader. Carol Stream, IL: LeaderTreks.

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 33-36

Emotionally Healthy Leader – Chapter 7-8

- **SESSION 9**

The Youth Leader's Health and Family - May 6, 2027

Youth ministry is a calling. For some that is for a lifetime and for others it's a season. However long you serve in youth ministry, you need to make sure you are taking care of yourself and your family.

Book Requirement:

Earley, Justin Whitmel. (2021). Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. (Entire book)

Trent, Chris. (2022). Youth Ministry for the Longer Haul: A Field Guide for Longevity. Birmingham, AL: youthministry360.com.

Lead Them To Jesus – Chapters 37-40

Emotionally Healthy Leader – Chapter 9

Textbooks & Resources

(included in registration cost)

- McGarry, Mike. (2021). *Lead them to Jesus: A Handbook for Youth Workers*. New Growth Press.
- Scazzero, Peter. (2015). *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming your inner life will deeply transform your church, team and the world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective.
- Blanks, Andy. (2012). *The 7 Best Practices for Teaching Teenagers the Bible*. Birmingham, AL: youthministry360.com.
- Blevins, Nick. (2023). *The Volunteer Playbook: A proven framework to help your church recruit, train and empower more volunteers*. Volunteerplaybook.com
- Dean, Jody and Jackson, Allen. (2019). *Protect: A Youth Worker's Guide to Navigating Risk*. Birmingham, AL: youthministry360.com.
- Earley, Justin Whitmel. (2021). *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan
- Franklin, Doug. (2010). *Student Leaders Start Here; Assessments & Tools to Help You Grow as a Leader*. Carol Stream, IL: LeaderTreks.
- Higgins, Chad & Workun, Zac. (2025) *Define the Relationship: Growing a Parent Ministry that Brings Families and Churches Together*. Nashville, TN: Lifeway Christian Resources.
- Scroggins, Clay. (2017). *How to Lead When You're Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Trent, Chris. (2022). *Youth Ministry for the Longer Haul: A Field Guide for Longevity*. Birmingham, AL: youthministry360.com.