



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

Virtual Youth Ministry

INFORMATION PACKET & APPLICATION

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VERSION 2.0

From the Office of the Bishop

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Dear Parents & Caregivers,

My name is Alex Flannagan, I'm the Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Diocese of Olympia. Your teen (aged 13+) is invited to join our online community, where fellow teens, clergy, and lay volunteers from around the diocese are ready and waiting to provide a warm welcome. The goal of the community is to nurture meaningful connections, develop a robust support network, and foster a deeper spiritual life in relationship with God, self, and one another.

The big question: **how do we keep everybody safe?**

The short answer: **we do it together.**

Online platforms present some inherent risk to users. Please review this document with your child and make a plan together so they feel comfortable coming to you for help if they need it.

- **The role of the diocese:** *maintain a safe environment by actively monitoring interactions, enforcing community guidelines, and maintaining up to date best practices.*
- **The role of the youth:** *participate and follow the community guidelines. Seek help from an adult if needed.*
- **The role of the parent:** *support the youth in staying safe and healthy online and contact the Youth Ministry Coordinator if any concerns arise.*

Ongoing, open and honest communication between all three parties is key. It's important to talk about safe internet and social media use with youth. The Youth Ministry Coordinator is available to work with parents and teens to create a fair usage agreement to maintain healthy online boundaries, relationships, expectations, and practices. (See the resources list on the last page.)

To join the group:

Email aflannagan@ecww.org to request a link. The link will take you to the "ECWW Youth" Discord server (more about Discord below). Links expire and reset every 7 days. Then log in or create an account. Once successful, participants will find themselves in a virtual holding area, only able to access the community guidelines. A moderator will verify your identity based on your application form before granting access to the group.

*****Online tours and demos available by request*****

Phone: 206.325.4200 x2032

Email: aflannagan@ecww.org

Community Guidelines:

The Diocese of Olympia uses social media (such as this Discord server) to maintain a welcoming online presence where people can learn, share, and hang out online in a safe space. In order to encourage a safe, online community, please abide by these guidelines:

1. **Safety first!** Protect your privacy and the privacy of others. Follow all community guidelines. If you feel unsafe, please reach out to a member of staff or let your parent/guardian/caregiver know.
2. **No put-downs.** Create a warm and welcoming space by being polite and respectful to all community members. Trolling, spamming, bullying, or hate speech of any sort will not be tolerated.
3. **Keep things PG.** Do not post graphic content, including explicit language, sexual content, gore, or inappropriate jokes. Avoid controversial topics.
4. **Usernames.** Upon joining the group, please change your nickname to your first name and last initial. Example: Alex F. and use an appropriate avatar.
5. **No on-on-one interactions.** Participants and staff should always avoid being in a direct, one on one situation with one another. Staff are not to send direct messages to participants. Participants may only send a direct message to staff if a second adult is included on the message. Otherwise, use text channels for all communication.

In case of failure to follow these guidelines: the Youth Ministry Coordinator may issue a temporary ban and/or contact the individual and parent/caregiver to examine what happened. If appropriate, a plan may be made for the individual to rejoin the community. Remember: *you are responsible for your actions and may exclude yourself by your own behavior. The staff reserves the right to delete any comments or mute or kick or ban any member from the server.*

Thank you for reviewing this information packet. I hope to welcome your teen to our online community – an extension of the youth ministry in the Diocese of Olympia. Please don't hesitate to be in touch as needed.



Alex Flannagan
Youth Ministry Coordinator
Diocese of Olympia

Application Form

Please complete this application and return by email to: aflannagan@ecww.org. Participants may only be granted access to the server once a completed application is received.

Participant's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email Address: _____

Congregation/Church: _____

Pronouns: _____

Discord Username (if you already have one): _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Email Address: _____

Relationship to Minor: _____

Release of Liability

I am the parent or legal guardian with responsibility for the minor child named below, and authorize their participation in the ECWW Youth Discord server provided by Diocese of Olympia Inc. I acknowledge and agree that Diocese of Olympia Inc. will monitor, capture, and save all written chat from text channels on the ECWW Youth Discord server. I expressly assume all risks associated with or arising from my minor's attendance or participation in the ECWW Youth Discord server and agree to hold harmless the Diocese of Olympia Inc., and their representatives from any claims and expenses, with the exception of gross negligence or reckless misconduct.

While participating in the ECWW Youth Discord server, I and my minor will obey all rules, regulations, and laws of the State of Washington and the United States, as well as the ECWW Youth community guidelines.

I give permission for individual or group photographs or video footage of my child to be used by Diocese of Olympia Inc. for historical and/or promotional purposes.

I have read all the above terms and conditions and I understand and agree to be bound by them.

Name of Minor: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

What is Discord?

Discord is a group-chatting platform originally built for gamers that has since become a general use platform for all kinds of communities. If you're familiar with Slack, Discord is like a less formal version of that app. There's no algorithm deciding what you should see, no endless scrolling, and no news feed. Conversations on Discord are driven by shared interests. Each community (called a "server") has its own members, topics, rules, and channels. Our server is "ECWW Youth" (standing for Episcopal Church in Western Washington).

There are text channels set up for talking about school, leaving prayer requests, and keeping in touch between in-person programs and playing games. There are also voice channels which function similarly to Zoom, for weekly virtual programs that run year-round. Servers are configurable with different assignable roles providing different access permissions. For example, the "Adult" role is equipped with extra tools such as timeouts, mute, kick and ban functions that the "Youth" role does not have access to. Roles also makes it convenient to setup spaces that are only accessible to specific populations, for instance, high schoolers, middle schoolers, or the staff lounge.

All servers on Discord are opt-in, and our server is a private, invite-only space. This means that unless your child actively joins another server they will not be exposed to strangers while using the platform. Users have total control over who they interact with and what their experience on Discord is. While every step has been taken to create a safe environment for all, it is crucial to understand that the Diocese of Olympia cannot control nor be held responsible for unsafe or inappropriate interactions taking place outside of our group.

Resources

If you or your teen need support, or have questions, thoughts, or concerns, please contact:

Alex Flannagan

Youth Ministry Coordinator

Phone: 206.325.4200 x2032

Email: aflannagan@ecww.org.

Or refer to the recommended resources below:

Understanding Discord:

[The comprehensive beginner's guide to Discord](#)

[Discord Safety Center](#)

[Helping your teen stay safe on Discord](#)

[Talking about online safety with your teen](#)

[Answering parents' and educators' top questions](#)

Other Teen-Specific Online Safety:

[Internetmatters.org](https://www.internetmatters.org)

<https://www.thewhitehatter.ca/parents-caregivers>

[Best Practices for a Safe Church Online](#)

Mental Health:

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

[NAMI Kids, Teens, and Young Adults](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health – Child & Adolescent](#)

[Psychology Today](#)