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1.844.258.9616

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WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Merge is a gathering best suited for junior/senior high students, youth leaders, and adult volunteers.

IS THERE A REQUIRED ADULT TO YOUTH RATIO?

Yes, you must have 1 adult (21 years of age or older) for every 8 youth (20 years of age and under).

ARE BACKGROUND CHECKS REQUIRED?

Yes, all participants 18 years of age or older be screened and background checked by your church prior to attending.

- Background checks must be national and no older than two (2) years from the start of the trip.
- 18-20 year olds are not considered “adults” during the week, however because of our commitment to safety, we still ask them to go through your church’s screening process and have background checks run.
- Each group must have a digital pastor signature on the Screening and Verification Form for each participant who is 18 or older.
- You may use any organization to run your background checks, but if you are looking for a reliable one, we recommend Clear Investigative Advantage. Their basic background checks start at just \$12. They can be reached at 1.888.242.2503.

WHAT’S THE SCHEDULE?

Monday

5:30-7:00 p.m. Check-in

7:00 p.m. Adult Meeting and program doors open for youth

7:30 p.m. Program

Tuesday-Thursday

8:30 a.m. Morning program

9:00 a.m. Student and leader training

10:30 a.m. Leave for project sites

12:00 p.m. On-site lunch and devotions

4:00 p.m. Depart from service projects (free time and dinner on your own)

7:30 p.m. Evening program

Friday

8:30 a.m. Morning program

9:00 a.m. Student and leader training

10:30 a.m. Leave for project sites

12:00 p.m. On-site lunch and devotions

2:00 p.m. Return from service projects

3:00 p.m. Final program

3:30 p.m. Depart for home

WHAT ABOUT TRANSPORTATION?

Groups need to provide transportation to and from the conference as well as daily to and from the project sites. Mileage or fuel costs are not reimbursed for any transportation costs.

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IS LODGING AND FOOD INCLUDED IN THE REGISTRATION FEE?

Lodging, breakfasts, and dinners are not provided at Merge. Lunches will be provided Tuesday-Friday. You will choose and book your own accommodations. Here are some suggestions--call local churches within your denomination to see if you can use their facility or look at the specific Merge location you're interested in and search for hotels within close proximity. You could also look into camping options in the area and create a fun experience with your youth. We aren't affiliated with any hotels but are always available to answer questions.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE REGISTRATION FEE?

- ▶ Lunch Tuesday through Friday
- ▶ Participant T-shirt
- ▶ Powerful worship
- ▶ Devotions before, during and after the trip
- ▶ Community service projects where your group will serve and help people in need
- ▶ Leadership training for your students
- ▶ Community service certificate for your students
- ▶ Leadership certificate for your students after training
- ▶ Youth leader training that will include key strategies to strengthen your ministry
- ▶ An online Group Page full of resources to help prepare you and your group for the trip
- ▶ Unlimited customer support from professional and courteous staff

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAMS LIKE?

Our Programs Are:

- ▶ Powerful worship experiences. You will experience powerful times of worship led by a speaker and worship band.
- ▶ Focused on Jesus. Our goal is to point people to Jesus. The programs highlight daily themes through Bible passages that connect us to Jesus in surprising and memorable ways.
- ▶ Relevant. We want to engage each participant in a way they can best understand. Because we want to engage each participant in a way they can understand, we use a diversity of methods - creative multimedia, thought provoking sound and video, and moving contemporary worship.
- ▶ Fun. Expect to have a great time! You'll experience relationship-building activities, games, and casual conversations throughout each program day.
- ▶ Interactive. We all learn better by doing. Our programs provide opportunities for people to BE involved, not just sitting, watching, and listening. Every participant will have opportunities to be involved in sharing, conversations, singing, reflecting, and more.

Our Programs Are **Not**:

- ▶ Sacramental, Liturgical or... We will not be sharing sacraments or practicing traditional liturgy like denominations do in their unique ways. However, you are welcome to celebrate your faith traditions during your specific youth group devotion time.
- ▶ Altar Calls. Every program offers opportunities to respond to God in different ways at different times... without pressure or manipulation. Your youth leader will help your students process their spiritual growth and faith journey.
- ▶ Denominational. We come together from many different churches to grow closer to Jesus and serve people in need. Be prepared to share what we have in common and set differences aside.

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WHAT KIND OF TRAINING DO WE GET?

In partnership with Kenny & Elle Campbell, co-founders of Grow Curriculum, your students will be challenged to be passionate servant leaders in their schools, churches, and world. Student leadership training will cover topics such as:

- ▶ Godly leaders are bold (Identify your unique design and personal values)
- ▶ Godly leaders choose integrity (Choosing excellence, setting priorities, and managing time)
- ▶ Godly leaders are grateful (Start a new gratitude habit)
- ▶ Godly leaders are servants (Discover your gifts, identify the needs of others)

Students will receive a leadership certificate after 6 hours of training

We know you care about the adults within your ministry too. In partnership with Ministry Architects, your adult leaders will learn key strategies through teaching topics such as: What Makes an Awesome Leader, What's Happening in Youth Ministry Today, How to Thrive (Not Just Survive) in Youth Ministry and What Volunteers/ Staff Need Most.

HOW WILL WE BE SERVING DURING THE DAY?

Projects might include:

- ▶ Assisting a feeding ministry that serves meals to the homeless and families in need
- ▶ Visiting a senior center to engage in relationship with residents and help with tasks
- ▶ Working with local nonprofits to sort food and clothing for support and distribution
- ▶ Providing basic home repairs to low-income, elderly, disabled, or veteran residents
- ▶ Leading a day camp for kids
- ▶ Tutoring struggling children from low-income families

Students will receive a community service certificate after 25 hours of service.

WILL OUR GROUP BE SERVING TOGETHER?

Groups will be assigned to projects together. If your group is small, there is a chance another group could be working at the same location. If your group is large, you could be split up at multiple sites.

WHAT ABOUT SAFETY? Safety is our top priority!

- ▶ We require groups to bring 1 adult (21 or older) for every 8 participants that are under 21 years of age.
- ▶ We require participants that are 18 and older be screened and background-checked by their church. Their pastor signs off that they've met our requirements and approve of them attending.
- ▶ Every staff member has been screened, background-checked, and reference checked by Merge Staff.
- ▶ We review safety procedures during the week.
- ▶ Participants are not required to do any work that they consider unsafe.
- ▶ Although we do serve in needy areas, we require work crews to stay together at all times. No one should ever be left alone and all participants are back at the lodging facility by their designated check in time.
- ▶ Merge Staff visits each project location daily so they are aware of where a crew is working and any issues in the area.
- ▶ Every crew has the direct phone number to the staff office and directions to the closest hospital. If an injury occurs on the project site, and is not serious, staff will contact the youth leader and coordinate any transportation needed. If the injury is serious, the adult on site will call 911 and staff will offer support and ensure needed medical forms are delivered to hospital. Each crew will have a small first aid kit and a bigger one for every vehicle.

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WILL THERE BE STAFF ON SITE?

Yes, Merge Staff will be centrally located at the conference venue during the week. They will visit project sites during the day and participants will be given a phone number to contact them if needed.

WHEN ARE THE PAYMENT DATES?

After you register by paying \$50 (non-refundable) per space, there are 2 payment dates for the remaining amount:

- ▶ March 15th, 2020: Half of what is remaining is due.
- ▶ May 15th, 2020: The final balance is due. (All payments are non-refundable after this date.)

WHAT IF I NEED TO ADD OR CANCEL A SPACE?

Call us! If there's space available, we'll ask for necessary payment to add on spaces. If you have a cancellation, and you've exhausted all efforts to re-fill spaces, contact us to let us know. We'll adjust your balance accordingly. If you cancel a space before May 15th, 2020 you'll just lose the \$50 deposit. The entire fee is forfeited for cancellations made after May 15th, 2020.

WHAT IF I NEED TO CANCEL MY ENTIRE GROUP?

Cancellations have a huge effect on the people we serve, it is devastating news to them when we have to cancel. Based on the number of registered participants, we plan for food, supplies and staffing—just for starters. Also, depending on the time of year, it is simply impossible for us to re-fill cancelled spaces.

We also recognize that unexpected events happen that can pull participants away from their original commitment. Please give us a call, we are happy to talk through ideas to recruit other participants and keeping your group intact.

If there is no other option but to cancel your group, call us by May 15th, 2020 to let us know. As long as you cancel by May 15th, you'll only lose \$50 per spot. All fees will be forfeited for any cancellations after May 15th.

IS THERE A DRESS CODE?

We request modest clothing choices in our Code of Conduct. While Merge doesn't have a formal dress code, we serve local organizations that do have specific requirements for volunteers. Don't be turned away from your assigned project due to inappropriate dress!

- ▶ Pack plenty of t-shirts, longer shorts, capris or pants, and close toe shoes.
- ▶ Please have your females bring a one-piece swimsuit in case they are assigned to a project site teaching a resident how to swim.
- ▶ Many of our partner organizations don't allow volunteers to wear spaghetti straps, shirts that reveal the midriff, short shorts or flip flops. And, of course, no clothing with offensive language or images.

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WHAT IF SOMEONE IN OUR GROUP HAS TO LEAVE EARLY OR ARRIVE LATE?

We ask that all participants arrive on time and stay for entire time. Every part of the program is valuable and helps guarantee a life-changing experience. We really try not to make too many exceptions to this because it does effect other participants, partners, and work projects--so please check the schedule and make travel arrangements accordingly. Contact us if a situation arises.

DO PARTICIPANTS HAVE TO HAVE INSURANCE?

- ▶ Personal health insurance is not required to attend, although highly recommended.
- ▶ If you carry personal health insurance, bring the appropriate information. It is needed if treated at any health-care facility.
- ▶ All health-care costs are the responsibility of the participants or his or her parent/guardian.
- ▶ If you have participants without adequate medical insurance and/or you desire to purchase trip protection insurance, you can purchase low-cost domestic and international insurance from any insurance provider of your choice.

DO YOU HAVE REFERENCES?

Absolutely! Don't just take our word for it. Give us a call (844.258.9616) and we'd be happy to connect you with other youth leaders who have served with us.