

St. Dunstan's ACADEMY

The Joshua Program: Gap Year for High School Graduates

The Joshua Program offers eight months of adventure, work, and vocational discernment for young men (ages 18-20) who have graduated high school. The goal of this character development program is to form tough, faithful, hard-working, and thoughtful men. Whether they attend college, enter the skilled trades, join the military, start a farm, or choose another path, **all men are called to serve their families faithfully, their communities productively, and the Church devotedly.** The Joshua Program equips graduates to embrace these vocations.

Joshua Program students (“Joshuas”) also commit to a rule of digital poverty — no phones, computers, music players, video games, or other digital-media devices are permitted on campus. Instead of consuming entertainment, the young men make music together.

No one part of our program is unique to St. Dunstan’s: many places offer inspiring adventures, apprenticeships in the trades, farming education, or Christian spiritual instruction. *The combination is what is unique — our well-rounded program is unlike any other we have found.*

Trades education

“Joshuas” learn the basics of timber framing, carpentry, and home construction. In addition to gaining competence with tools and confidence working on a crew, our young men will gain the skills needed to build and maintain their own houses.

Small-scale agriculture

As St. Dunstan’s Academy starts its farm, Joshua Program students care for animals, cultivate pasture and develop farm infrastructure, and learn to grow and raise food for themselves and their families and communities.

Outdoorsmanship and survival skills

“Joshuas” spent part of the year living out-of-doors in our platform tent system, during which time they will become certified in Wilderness First Aid, complete rigorous overnight treks on the Appalachian Trail, and learn basic scoutcraft and survival skills.

Vocational seminars

Partners from the local community — farmers, small business owners, craftsmen, contractors, and others — present to our students about their backgrounds, their faith journey, the work they do, and the businesses they started, sharing their wisdom about alternative ways to make a living and offering concrete advice about following in their footsteps.

Spiritual formation

At St. Dunstan's Academy, our mission is to help every young man grow "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Our whole program is oriented towards growth in holiness, but we particularly emphasize the study of Scripture. Together we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Bible — after first hearing the Scriptures proclaimed in Morning and Evening Prayer and in sermons and homilies.

We welcome Joshua Program students with the exhortation to be strong and courageous — and then present them with challenges requiring strength and courage. At the end of their time, they are sent out with the charge to choose this day whom they will serve, knowing that the Lord their God will be with them wherever they go.

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1:9

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

Curriculum and Adventure Sequence

In addition to at-the-elbow learning about trades and agriculture, students read select texts exploring what it means to be a man. Manhood is multi-faceted; each young man will have his own unique gifts. While keeping the incredible variety of man's experiences, potential, and achievements in mind, readings and discussions will investigate a set of core masculine identities: adventurer, thinker, worker, brother, protector, provider, singer, gentleman, competitor, and martyr.

To that end, we read poetry, short stories, excerpts, and the occasional book by authors like G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, Wendell Berry, Robert Frost, St. Augustine, Martin Thornton, and Matthew Crawford. Students also choose one biography to read from a list of figures including George Washington, Tecumseh, Abraham Lincoln, Kit Carson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill. Each week also features study and discussion of Scriptures particularly relevant to understanding ourselves as image bearers, as members of the Body of Christ, and as men.

There are no grades or marks in the Joshua Program. A well-rounded man reads because he is hungry for knowledge and eager to expand his soul, and the variety of texts we read together are meant to inspire that kind of poetic engagement. But ours is not primarily an academic program. It is intentionally more hands-on than high school or college. We aim to produce wise men in the tradition of Bezalel, the great architect of the first Jewish Temple, who is the first man called wise in the scriptures (Exodus 31:1-5) — and in the tradition of Solomon, whose "wisdom and understanding

beyond measure” consisted in “proverbs” and “songs” and in speaking “of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish” (1 Kings 4:29-34).

Cost, Calendar, and Sample Weekly Schedule

The cost of the program is \$22,000, which covers tuition, room, board, and materials.

The program runs from Wednesday, September 22, 2027 until Friday, May 26, 2028.

Breaks: Thanksgiving (Friday, November 19 until Monday, November 29); Christmas (Friday, December 17 until Monday, January 3); and Easter (Easter Monday, April 17 to Tuesday, April 25)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5:30 AM	Personal Devotions					
6:00 AM	Morning workout, chores, breakfast		Personal Devos	Morning workout, chores, breakfast		Chores, breakfast, MP
7:00 AM			MP and Holy Communion			
8:15 AM	Morning Prayer and Summit	Morning Prayer and Summit	Breakfast	Morning Prayer and Summit	Morning Prayer and Summit	Leisure, Challenges, Adventure, or Service
9:30 AM			Common Arts <i>(Farming, building, trades)</i>			
12:30 PM	Lunch					
1:00 PM	Common Arts <i>(Farming, building, trades)</i>					
4:00 PM	Evening Prayer					
4:30 PM until lights out (10 PM)	Evening Chores, Dinner, Leisure				Leisure, Dinner, and Folk Music Fridays Jam	Evening Chores, Dinner, Leisure

Sundays are devoted to church (on campus), rest, and leisure.

