

Vision for Youth Ministry and Values

Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church provides a welcoming youth ministry that fosters a strong sense of connection with others, where each individual is valued and nurtured, and all are accepted as God's unique creations. Our youth are an integrated and visible part of the congregation and are involved in the full life of the church. We have dedicated adult leaders who support and guide our youth as they navigate through the challenges of being a young person in today's world. Our youth recognize, value, and embrace the responsibility of answering God's call to love and serve *all* people. Saint Andrews Youth Ministry inspires spiritual growth that actively engages each individual in a lifelong walk with Christ.

We value...

* **Being Children of God.** Helping youth realize they are children of God, and that that identity permeates all we are and do. Everything we do is in response to our faith in Jesus Christ, and we encourage youth to explore what this means and how we live this out.

* **A Sense of Belonging.** Helping youth know they are welcome and belong in this family of God called "church." Youth need to know that no matter where they come from or what they've experienced, they have a place in the church.

* **Embracing Youth Culture.** Knowing who young people are and working to include their needs and interests in our programming, always challenging them to hold these up to the life and witness of Jesus Christ.

* **Self-Discovery.** Helping youth discover their God-given gifts and talents and helping them see how these gifts are connected to other people and need to be shared.

* **Working with Youth.** Empowering youth to engage in programming and planning. Young people are involved in decisions made about what happens with them.

* **Leadership & Involvement.** Realizing that youth are not only the church of tomorrow; they are the church of today too! They have a role and a place in leadership and on committees right now. Youth are leaders. We will look for ways to encourage and nurture youth in leadership. Leading in partnership with adults is one way that youth in leadership can come alive.

* **Connectivity.** Helping youth see how they are connected to each other and the entire world. Youth ministry cannot be a satellite program. It cannot be a place where we put youth in a holding pattern and wait for them to "get over" this stage of their development before they join the life of the church and the world. Youth ministry must be a part of the whole.

* **Encouragement.** Encouraging youth to see themselves and participate in this place where faith and life cannot be separated. Youth need to see how and where faith is connected to life and that the life Christ calls us to is life that happens every day beyond the walls of the church.

* **Inclusiveness.** Excluding no one. All youth are welcome in the life of youth programs and church. This community of faith is living and breathing and therefore open.

Anything we do or use in youth ministry will reflect these values as we strive to make our Church's mission statement come alive for the youth in our care.

What We Are Not

In addition to these things we intend to do, it is helpful to explain what we do not intend to do in ministry with youth. Dave Ng, professor of education at San Francisco Theological Seminary, wrote in his excellent book, *Youth in the Community of Disciples*, that when we do youth ministry, we do not intend to do the following four things:

- 1. Maintenance.** We do not do youth ministry just to maintain young people through their adolescent years until they can contribute significantly to the congregation. Some people view ministry as glorified babysitting. Such a view discounts the God-given gifts young people bring now and assumes they are of no value until they are older.
- 2. Entertainment.** We do not do youth ministry to entertain and razzle-dazzle young people. We simply cannot compete with the high-tech entertainment offered to young people today, nor do we need to.
- 3. Protection.** We do not do youth ministry to protect young people from the world. In fact, Presbyterians, because of our Reformed theology, believe God calls us to be active in the world and to help bring about glimpses of God's realm. Young people cannot be protected from the world. Rather, our job is to equip them as Disciples of Christ in the world to spread the good news of Christ's redeeming love.
- 4. Fellowship.** This may sound strange at first, but Dave Ng's point is well taken. We do not do youth ministry to provide young people with an instant group of friends. Certainly we hope friendships will develop, but we are not just a nice social clique of people who get together to go on trips and watch videos. We are the body of Christ, called together by God and enabled by the Holy Spirit to witness to the world of God's love.

We affirm this viewpoint in our ministry with youth at SAPC.