

Multimedia Use in Youth Ministry Programs

A variety of multi-media resources are used within youth ministry programs for both educational and recreational purposes. However, we believe that not all multi-media resources support the values of our faith and the beliefs of the Church. When considering the use of media, SAPC will follow common rating standards: PG-13 is not appropriate for middle school youth, R-rated through X-rated is not appropriate for either age group. If there is a question as to the appropriateness of other media, it will be resolved by church staff and/or the Youth Committee.

If PG-13 or R-rated material is decided appropriate for use, parents will be notified ahead of time of this decision with rationale for its use.

Programs with Sensitive/Controversial Content

When any program of sensitive or controversial content is decided appropriate and is planned, we will notify parents ahead of time, explaining the program content, giving our rationale, and first securing permission for their youth to be included. An example might be programs on Sexuality and Decision-making, Dating Standards, Substance Abuse, etc. We will always work to keep parents informed.

Financing Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry at SAPC is financed in three ways:

1. **Church Budget Appropriation** - Each year the Youth Committee will prepare an annual budget request to be submitted to the Session. The Session will approve or amend the request. This appropriation will be used for educational and recreational materials, event registration fees for adult advisors, and when possible, to subsidize special event fees for youth.
2. **Registration Fees** - Fees will be charged for special events to cover registration, travel, meals and lodging. Payment of a small fee may be required for an occasional special activity, which is held at or begins at the church. This fee usually covers the cost of meals, snacks, entertainment, etc.

Youth Ministry can be very costly to families, but we will always be aware of this fact and work to contain cost as much as possible. When possible, some special event registration fees will be subsidized from the church budget appropriation. Scholarships are available, and parents can make confidential inquiries with the Youth staff.

3. **Fundraising** - Any fundraising activity must be approved by the Youth Committee prior to being submitted for final approval of the Session. Youth groups may conduct an activity to secure funds not included in the church budget appropriation, to defray expenses for church sponsored special events, to finance mission trips and projects or to contribute to an approved special cause.

The goal of the Youth Committee is for the High School Mission Trip to be funded each year using the following model: 1/3 of the participant cost paid by the youth's family, 1/3 paid by the SAPC Missions Committee, and the final 1/3 being fundraised by the youth group. Fundraising will also cover the costs for adult chaperones.

Scheduling of Youth Ministry Programs

Beginning times, ending times, and necessary event details for Youth Ministry events and activities will be publicized in the weekly bulletins, church newsletter, weekly e-mails, church website, Sunday night programs and

periodic youth mailings. E-mail, text, and/or phone calls will be used as the most frequent means of notifying youth and parents of upcoming events or last-minute changes. It is the responsibility of youth and parents to read publicity media. Every intention will be made to properly publicize events and due dates.

Any informal gatherings other than these publicized hours and events are not a part of our program, and, therefore, neither the responsibility nor the liability of SAPC to organize, coordinate or supervise.

Care of Church Buildings and Property

Youth groups are always welcome to use church facilities and equipment in their programs and projects. In some instances, a reservation may be required to assure availability. Adult advisors, youth director, and youth must be mindful that when they use church buildings and grounds, equipment and vehicles, they should be properly cared for, cleaned and left in good order for the next group to use.

This policy includes properly cleaning and storing equipment and completely cleaning cars and church vans **before** leaving an event. Parents should be mindful of this when picking up their youth.

Ratio of Adult Advisors to Youth on Special Events and Onsite Programs

A special event is any youth ministry program that takes place off-site from our church or at a time outside of regularly scheduled program times.

A ratio of 6 youth to one adult (21 years old or older for special event purposes) will be maintained during special events with a minimum of two adults present at all times regardless of the number of youth participating. (Example: 8 youth =2 adults; 17 youth = 3 adults).

Our intention, whenever possible, is to have both male and female adult advisors at each special event. For overnight events, if youth of both genders attend, adult advisors of both genders must accompany the youth.

A minimum of at least two adults is mandated for any trip or event either at or away from our church. For safety reasons, an event is subject to cancellation if the minimum number of adult advisors is unobtainable. Any exceptions to the above stated policies are subject to the approval of the Youth Committee.

Our Guest Policy

Unless otherwise designated, youth are welcome to bring friends to on-site youth ministry programs, provided they are the appropriate age/grade for a specific program.

SAPC youth ministry shall include all youth members of the church as well as non-church members who participate regularly in the youth ministry programs. We will also strive to include other non-church member young people in the youth ministry program. Some events, however, may be limited by space and other considerations. Reservations will be taken on a first-come-first serve basis except where applications are required. Members of the youth ministry program will have first priority. After the deadline for registration, vacancies may be filled from a waiting list. For some special events and mission trips, an application and acceptance may be required.

Prior to attending any off-site event guest and non-members are required to attend one full Youth Group meeting. This is to ensure that the youth director and other adult advisors develop a relationship with the youth before they travel with our group. Guests and non-members are expected to follow all SAPC and youth ministry policies. This includes completing any necessary forms and paying any fees for special events.

Participation

Because the purpose of many programs and events is to foster camaraderie and togetherness (group building), and because they require significant advance planning, a commitment to full attendance at the event is required. Accordingly, no youth should arrive late or leave early except in the case of an emergency.

Consent Forms

The SAPC Event Release & Medical Form for the program year must be completed and signed by parent/guardian before the youth may participate in any event which takes place away from the church. It will be the responsibility of each parent to keep this form updated if any information on this form changes. This form will remain on file for the academic year (September-August). It is the responsibility of parents to know if regular Sunday evening programs are on or off church property. Every intention will be made to publicize off-site events ahead of time. The Youth Ministry Staff will keep all collected forms in a binder that will be accessible at all SAPC events.

In addition to the Event Release form, permission forms for each specific off-site event will be required. These forms will typically serve as registration forms for the event and will be due with event deposits.

Deposit Fees

A registration deposit fee for events is presumptively non-refundable so that an event can be assured adequate advance funding and planning. However, a refund will be allowed if the applicant's position is filled from a waiting list. Also, under special circumstances, a refund may be provided at the discretion of Youth Director.

Youth Ministry Event Requirements

Youth should commit fully to the whole experience and be mindful of the prerequisites. For an event experience that includes a separate planning retreat, orientation meeting, skills familiarization, written communication, preparation, or other requirement, such requirements shall be mandatory. Youth who are unable for any reason to fulfill the requirements, will be replaced by the next person on the waiting list. If there is no waiting list, the youth may still attend but will be expected to fulfill similar and possibly additional requirements prior to the event experience as directed by church staff or event coordinator and also meet with the Youth Committee. The purpose of these requirements is not to penalize youth but to insure a safe environment and successful event for youth dedicated to the experience.

Transportation

Transportation for youth activities will usually occur in one or more of the following conveyances:

1. Church owned vans. All drivers of church vans must be pre-approved adults with a valid driver's license. If a driver is under age 25, the church will conduct a driving record check.
2. Rental vans or buses. Rental vans and buses will be operated according to procedures set forth by the rental companies, including license and insurance requirements. Drivers will be responsible for familiarity and compliance with rental company policies.
3. Private automobile of parents, adult advisors, teachers, Bible study leaders, and other pre-approved members of SAPC.

Youth may not drive their own vehicles to any special event or activity that takes place away from the church, except in very special circumstances and with written permission of parents and approval of the Youth Director. Youth being granted this special permission may not take other youth as passengers on return trips.

Adults transporting youth will be listed on a roster, which includes license numbers, insurance, and vehicle information. For safety reasons, vehicles should be in good repair and fully fueled so that unplanned stops can be avoided. The insurance of the adult driver will be responsible for all accident claims that occur while transporting SAPC youth. **Each occupant must be provided and use a seat belt.**

For safety, each vehicle will have a copy of the event release and medical forms of each youth riding in the vehicle during an out-of-town activity. It is expected that all youth and drivers will assist the youth director in organizing the forms and will notify the youth director of any vehicle changes among riders.

It is expected that parents and advisors who volunteer to provide transportation for youth activities will remain for the entire portion of driving for which they volunteered.

Barring emergencies, early departures and schedule changes are strongly discouraged in order to prevent overcrowding and unsafe conditions in remaining vehicles.

Sleeping Arrangements and Policies for Overnight Events

Sleeping arrangements in designated areas will be determined by church staff and adult advisors with consideration for privacy needs, and will be supervised closely by adult advisors. Our intention is to have separate sleeping rooms for males and females. If separate rooms are not available, separate areas for males and females will be designated. Privacy, safety and appropriate behaviors are expected.

“Lights Out” will be part of all overnight programs. The time for lights out will be determined by adult advisors and announced either prior to the event or as part of the schedule orientation.

Leaving the venue or leaving the residence after designated curfew and/or during the night is prohibited except in an emergency situation with permission from church staff or an adult advisor who will accompany the youth at all times. Any violation of this policy will result in a phone call to parents and may also result in limited participation in future events and/or removal from the event at parent’s expense and inconvenience.

Medications and Treatments

For youth who must take a prescription or non-prescription medication or treatment while attending a special event, we establish this policy for their safety and well being. During youth activities away from home, all medications (prescription and non-prescription) will be kept in the possession of the adult advisors or church staff who will supervise the youth’s taking of such medication according to the written instructions of that youth’s parent or legal guardian.

Substance Abuse Policy

The possession of any substance obtained illegally by a minor youth, will be prohibited by all participants at any event. This includes alcoholic beverages and street drugs. Also prohibited is the use or abuse of any substance beyond its intended use. (This includes misuse/illegal use of prescription medications.)

To arrive at a program or event under the influence of such substances is prohibited.

Violation of this policy will result in a phone call to parents and removal from the event at parents expense and inconvenience.

Also, use of and possession of tobacco products is prohibited at all church sponsored activities. An advisor will confiscate items, and parents will be notified of this violation.

Possession of Weapons

The possession or use of firearms, fireworks, explosive devices, knives or any item used as a weapon is prohibited at any on-site or off-site event. Violation of this policy will result in a phone call to parent(s) and removal from the event at parent's expense and inconvenience.

A person witnessing a violation of the substance abuse or weapons possession policies has a responsibility to lovingly intervene by promptly sharing their knowledge with an adult youth worker or Youth Director.

Technology Use by Youth

We recognize that technology is a large part of the world our teenagers live in. In order to foster strong Christian relationships among our youth and teach responsible use of technology, the following policies regarding personal technology have been set. Cell phone, I-pod and other personal electronic device use is prohibited at all events that occur at the church. At Sunday School and Youth Group meetings youth will have the opportunity to place their phone in a designated place. Phones that are not put in the designated place will be confiscated if seen or heard and a parent will be required to retrieve the phone from youth staff or adult advisors. I-pods and other devices should not be brought to the church. Exceptions to this policy will be approved by the Youth Committee and clearly noted in event publications. On trips and events away from the church cell phones and other electronics will be permitted. For each event youth will be instructed on appropriate times to use electronics and any specific rules. Electronics will be confiscated if they are used at inappropriate times and returned to youth at the conclusion of the event.

Discipline and Personal Conduct

As a community of faith, we affirm the following theological points in relation to discipline:

We are created good, so we need to expect goodness. We recognize ourselves as sinners, so we are aware of sinfulness.

Church is both a place we are called to be and a place we choose to be. Church, like any community, needs boundaries or it ceases to be a community. Therefore, we assume that when people participate in Youth Ministry Programs, they choose to live within the boundaries of covenant. When an individual chooses to break a rule or boundary, he or she chooses against being in community. We should respect that decision and separate the person from those who have chosen to remain in community.

Communities of faith live in a pattern of grace-law-grace. In other words, we live under grace, and we attempt to be faithful to God's law by grace. When we fail, there are consequences, and then there is grace again. So, we always welcome back youth when they are ready to rejoin the community of faith.

We affirm the following expectations:

* As a participant in any event or program, youth and adult advisors must be attentive that they are ambassadors for Jesus Christ and SAPC and behave accordingly.

* Youth and adult advisors agree to abide by the SAPC Covenant Agreement, which states:

I have willingly chosen to participate in Youth Group events at Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church. As a participant, I will work toward the goals of the ministry and the building of the group into a Christian community by:

1. **Participating** wholeheartedly and enthusiastically in all the activities planned for our group.
2. **Speaking up** when I have a problem, need, or concern.
3. **Listening/Responding** to the needs of others.
4. **Following** the guidance of the adult advisors.
5. **Respecting** other's property or rights, and abiding by the house rules.
6. **Using appropriate language** and respecting event leaders.
7. **Not using controlled substances.** Drinking alcoholic beverages, using drugs, smoking, possessing fireworks and firearms and promoting these activities are prohibited.
8. **Not leaving the event grounds** at any time without the permission of an adult advisor.
9. **Not bringing** inappropriate materials, such as offensive or vulgar music or literature, laser pointers, balloon launchers, etc.
10. **Being responsible** in my expressions of care, concern, and intimacy
11. **Accepting responsibility** for my own belongings.
12. **Encouraging others** to understand and abide by the above covenant and striving, as a Christian, to live as a supportive member of the group and as an example of faith and belief to those with whom we are in contact.

* I understand that success in abiding by this covenant will result in a positive group environment and experience. I also understand that failure to abide by any of these guidelines may result in a phone call to parents and removal from this or any event at my parent's expense.

* Inappropriate behavior can result in losing the right to participate in future events.

When disciplinary action is needed, advisors/staff will:

- a. Ignore minor behavior giving neither positive nor negative reinforcement.
- b. Make eye contact. Wait.
- c. Make appropriate contact with the youth, asking him/her to be quiet or follow directions. Remind him/her of covenant.
- d. Move youth to another part of the room or area, making sure he/she knows why.
- e. Remove youth from the group or classroom to sit quietly with adult supervision.
- f. Call parents, if disruptive behavior persists.
- g. Withhold a youth activity from the youth (i.e., retreat, outing, fellowship).