



NCBC

Youth group

policy manual

(our ministry Values, Guidelines, and policies)

Purpose of this manual

These are the guidelines and policies by which we operate our Middle School & High School youth ministries at New Covenant Bible Church. This policy manual is to be viewed as a fluid document. Any input from parents/guardians, students and sponsors is encouraged. Our goal is to maintain a ministry that honors Christ in all we do while running efficiently and effectively. See Mark or any sponsor with your ideas.

Pastors Mark Forstrom and Mark Eades
Revised March 7, 2017

Youth Group Purpose Statement:

The purpose of New Covenant's Youth Group is to honor God as a family of growing disciples who are committed to Christ, his Community and His Cause.

General Policies and Procedures

Communication

- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to come and participate in our youth activities at any time.
- E-mail is our primary communication vehicle to parents. We have an extensive database of addresses and we regularly send out information updates to parents/guardians, students and/or sponsors. If you don't have e-mail, the best thing is to find someone who regularly checks email and have them give the information to you.
- We utilize Facebook for announcements to those who are members of "New Covenant High School Youth Group Members" and "New Covenant Middle School Group."
- In addition, the High School group has a Twitter account: NCBCYOUTH is our twitter feed name.
- In High School, this week's announcements can always be viewed at www.tinyurl.com/youthgroupannouncements
- Text message are also sent to those with cell phones unless they indicate otherwise.
- Announcements in the church Bulletin and the NCBC "E-News" will be the source for information for those not already on our distribution lists.
- Flyers will often be available for special events.
- Questions or concerns about our High School ministry can be directed to the Youth Administrative Assistant, Gina Kaufman at church at 395-0021. Email us at gina.kaufman@newcovenantbible.org or mark.forstrom@newcovenantbible.org.
- Questions or concerns about our Middle School ministry can be directed to the Youth Administrative Assistant, Gina Kaufman at church at 395-0021. Email us at gina.kaufman@newcovenantbible.org or mark.eades@newcovenantbible.org.

Events

- We will provide a variety of activities throughout the year including weekly Wednesday and Sunday youth group times, retreats, service projects and fun events.
- Certain events, such as summer trips, may require faithful weekly attendance and possibly other prerequisites.

Official vs. non-official events.

Many events each year are officially sponsored by our youth group. But others will be generated by students or parents/guardians and may or may not involve supervision or conservative standards of conduct. Therefore it would be good to define when an event is "officially" church-sponsored.

Official Youth Group Sponsored Events

- High School Events will be communicated as such by an official FB posting, e-mail, text, or publication from Pastor Mark, Gina Kaufman or a Quad Sponsor and/or mentioned in our church bulletin, e-news or websites.

- Middle School Events will be communicated as such by an official FB posting, e-mail or publication from Mark Eades, Gina Kaufman or a Middle School sponsor and/or mentioned in our church bulletin, e-news or websites.
- Will be supervised by at least two adult sponsors (or properly trained parents/guardians).
- Will comply with all the expectations outlined in this Youth Policy Manual.

Non-official events.

- Will never be promoted via official church publications or e-mail addresses.
- Could possibly be promoted at youth group verbally or by flyers that get handed out.
- Should not mention NCBC on any written flyers or Facebook event posts.
- May be adequately supervised or not supervised at all, depending on what it is.
- Have no set conduct standards, such as what movies they may be showing.
- Require parents/guardians to investigate to ensure their supervision expectations are met.
- The church assumes NO responsibility or liability for such events, even if a youth sponsor or youth pastor attends all or part of it.

Please be aware of these distinctions and be sure that your expectations are being met. Unofficial events can be very beneficial and help kids get and stay connected with each other. They normally are very good. But feel free to contact us or other parents/guardians if you want opinions about the suitability of any particular unofficial event.

Attendance.

We use computer kiosks in the youth areas to check in our students and take attendance. This electronic check-in system saves us time each week of manual attendance recording and it also allows the automatic printing of nametags, which we use weekly as a way to help everyone quickly get acquainted.

Check in by punching in the last four digits of your phone number and following the directions onscreen.

Videos, Movies & Music

We sometimes utilize videos, movies and music in our youth group events. But rather than using them as mere mindless entertainment, we emphasize the importance of thinking Christianly about our media choices. These forms of media can be great opportunities for discussions of truth. We'll do our best to show appropriate content as a way to honor the standards of parents/guardians, and where sin is depicted, we will ensure that it is put in its proper context in accordance with the truth of Scripture. If you have any questions or concerns about media choices, please let us know.

Costs

It will be our goal to keep costs as low as possible for activities. Our events will be characterized by frugality rather than extravagance. No one should ever be prevented from attending because of cost. (See next section on Financial Aid.)

Financial Aid Policies

In cases where a lack of finances would keep a student from participating in an event, please talk to Pastor Mark about your situation. If your family is struggling financially*, scholarship money may be available following the biblical principle of those in the church sharing with those who are in need (Acts 2:45). For less serious needs,

another possibility is to earn “credit” money as you work for the church, youth program or staff. This plan follows the biblical principle “if a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thes. 3:7-13).

The following guidelines will apply to those working for money:

- Work must be arranged and completed **in advance** of the event. (IOUs have not worked in the past nor have promises to “work after the trip.”)
- Work must be arranged **at a time that is convenient** for any needed supervisors. The further in advance the work is arranged, the easier this will be to schedule. Don’t expect to ask the week of the event to earn the entire cost of it.
- We don’t always have an unlimited amount of work that needs to be done. Again, the further in advance the work is arranged, the more likely we will have projects to do.
- Credit to your account will be issued at the end of each work period, which can be redeemed at any youth activity or trip. Ask the Admins to find out your current credit balance.
- There will be a direct relationship between the amount and quality of work and credit dollars earned.
- The current wage rate will depend on the difficulty of the work, the speed and attitude with which work is done and the demand. The rate for honest work will usually be no less than \$6/hour and no more than minimum wage.

**By “struggling financially” we refer to those with legitimate financial needs. For example a student who uses his money for extravagant possessions (i-pods, computer games, etc) should not expect to be subsidized by the church because in that case it is a priority problem, not a money problem.*

Offsite Event Policies

Attendance

- It’s imperative to us not to lose track of anyone on our trips. This section identifies ways we prevent losing students, and what we will do in the unlikely event that someone ever becomes lost.
- Any time we transport students we will make a list of the names of everyone aboard with a phone number where parents/guardians can be reached. At this sign-in time it must be verified if the student will not be riding the bus home. Also, we will take the Medical Form notebook and a first aid kit with us in case of emergencies.
- If parents/guardians drive their students to and/or from an event, we expect them to personally contact a sponsor to let us know the student is now under our supervision. We also need to be informed when students are being picked up so we know when the student is released from our supervision. Whenever practical, we encourage kids to ride the bus—it is much easier for us to keep track of the kids when we all depart and return together.
- On occasion, we may announce and implement a late fine for students whose lateness would cause the group to wait.
- In the rare event when a student does not show up when it is time to depart and the bus needs to leave, our standard procedure will be to leave a sponsor (or suitable adult) behind to wait until we discover where the student is. At that time it will be necessary to call his/her parent/guardian to inform them of the situation and after the student is located, to make arrangements to reconnect the sponsor and student with the group or arrange transportation home.

Arrival and Departure Times

- We will promote a clear departure and an arrival time for most events. We will always strive to return earlier than the stated arrival time, so parents/guardians should be ready to pick kids up by then. Rarely should we be late.
- It’s important to us not to waste time waiting for kids to be picked up and it’s important to parents/guardians not to have to wait around for us to arrive.

- In the event that it appears we will be 30 minutes late or more due to an unforeseen event—if possible—we will call ahead and attempt to have a sign posted on the church doors so parents aren't waiting and wondering. If kids can text parents we will do so.
- Certain local events such as a concert or ball game are uncertain in their ending times. In such cases we will suggest the kids call or text home enroute.
- For long-distance trips where the return time may vary depending on road conditions, we will send out emails, FB notices, texts or other updates for parents/guardians to check.

Safety

- Students will generally be required to stay in groups of three or more in all public places (amusement parks, water parks, campgrounds, etc.) They must also be in the vicinity of a sponsor while in their group of three (i.e. in the same building, park or section of a street.)
- We will particularly keep closer tabs on Middle School students. Depending on the setting, older students will be given more latitude.
- During events and when transporting students from one location to another face-to-face attendance taking will be taken often to verify everyone's presence. Parents/Guardians will be notified if students have removed themselves from our activity.

Transportation Policies

Church Vehicles

It's important to us that we take good care of the vehicles with which God has blessed us. When using church vehicles, the group leader is responsible for complying with the following nine passenger conduct guidelines, which have been set by our NCBC Transportation Council.

1. There will always be two sponsors (or approved adults) on the vehicle.
2. No hands, arms, legs or trash will be put out of windows or roof hatch.
3. No standing in front of the first row of seats (state law).
4. Emergency exits (rear, side, roof) should generally not be used by passengers as an alternative method of entry or exit when there is no emergency.
5. No screaming or excessive noise. The driver will determine a suitable volume level—other sponsors are to help enforce these expectations.
6. No open beverage containers will be allowed unless they are in someone's hand (i.e. no open pop cans sitting on the floor, seat cushions or seat backs).
7. Sponsors and bus driver will supervise the operation of the CD player, radio, and PA unit.
8. When vehicles are parked, no one should climb onto or sit on the exterior of vehicles, including the roof and hood.
9. Passengers must not deface the interior of the vehicle. This includes seats, flooring, windows and equipment.
10. When riding in the church Excursion, all youth in any seat shall wear seat belts. Seat belts are not required to be used in the buses.

Private Vehicles

- In situations where cars, mini-vans or vans are needed, it will be necessary that sponsors and other responsible adults drive. We require drivers for official youth functions to be 21 years of age or older with a good driving history.
- High school students will not be encouraged to drive during an activity unless they have permission from their parent/guardian and the youth pastor or sponsors. Additionally, anyone who wishes to ride with a driver younger than 21 years old at a church-sponsored event must receive verified permission from both his/her parent/guardian and the parent/guardian of the driver.

Rides Between Church and Home

- To remain above reproach, it is our practice to not have sponsors give rides alone to students of the opposite sex. In extenuating circumstances it is possible that such rides might be reasonably allowed, but only after obtaining the advance knowledge and permission of the parent/guardian. However, this should be a rare exception.
- Students can ride to church or home from church with other students, but this is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to monitor. We cannot be responsible for students before they arrive at a youth activity or after they leave.

Youth Group Conduct Expectations

The following expectations reflect our ministry values. They are not necessarily matters of right and wrong, but are primarily an expression of the kind of atmosphere that we find helps our ministry to thrive.

Most of these expectations are required for retreats and trips and encouraged at other times.

Decision Making. All sponsors have the authority to make decisions and are to be obeyed at all times. If questions or concerns arise, Pastor Mark will make final decisions.

Respect. Every team member has the right to be treated respectfully at all times.

Safety. For safety reasons, you must always remain in the vicinity of a sponsor, usually in groups of 2-3, but not as couples. We must always know how to reach you in case of an emergency. Be where you are supposed to be when asked so the group is not waiting for you. Also, do not give out your address, phone number or email to individuals you meet.

PDA. To avoid awkwardness, cliquiness and distracting from the purpose of our trip, we do not allow PDA (public displays of affection) between couples, unless you are married - in which case it is required. Our trip is not a date; it is a group experience, where we treat each other equally as brothers and sisters. This means couples may not hold hands, cuddle, lay on one another, isolate themselves, etc.

Sleep. Stay out of sleeping areas of opposite sex. Bedtime is firm: no staying up past or getting up before the times designated by Mark and/or the sponsors.

Courtesy. Our focus will be on building relationships and on creating a spiritually uplifting atmosphere. Therefore, there will be no gambling (poker, blackjack, etc), profanity, electronic devices (ipods, mp3s, electronic games, etc) or immodest attire. Also, we ask that no major body alterations be done on our events (piercings, tattoos, etc).

Modesty. These are the modesty guidelines for everyone (guys and girls).

Because we are Ambassadors of Christ as well as representatives of our church we want to avoid attire that might distract or be a stumbling block to anyone. (This dress code is encouraged during weekly youth group meetings and required during extended-duration events like trips and retreats.)

- ***Tops:*** T-shirts with sleeves only: no tank tops, muscle shirts, halter tops, tube tops, bare midriffs, etc.

- **Bottoms:** Shorts must extend down as far as your fingertips when your arms are extended straight down.
- **Swimsuits:** Make sure they're modest, no torso-revealing, cleavage-showing or bikini-style suits. We'll give you a t-shirt if your suit isn't modest enough.
- **Pajamas:** Same "tops" and "bottom" rules apply when in the presence of the opposite sex.
- **Churchwear on trips:** Guys: non-jean pants and collared shirt.
Girls: modest dress, or skirt or non-jean pants and blouse.

Serious Discipline must be required for the following and will likely result in a call home to your parent/guardian to discuss how best to send you home:

- Sexual activity
- Wandering off by yourself or as a couple
- Tobacco, drug or alcohol use
- Blatant or repeated disrespect and/or disobedience to sponsors