

# First United Methodist Youth Group Covenant

Christ gave us an example of respect and love for all. As a member of this group, I acknowledge my need to conduct myself in a mature and respectful manor. Because of His example, I commit to the following:

- **I will respect** other people's stuff. I will not go through or touch another's possessions without first asking for their permission.
- **I will respect** the church building because it belongs to all of us. I will clean up messes, respect the property of others and treat this place as I would treat my own home.
- **I will respect** what others have to say by listening when they are talking. I will allow others to speak their ideas and not distract them or take away from their ideas by talking while they are talking.
- **I will respect** all adult leaders by having a good attitude and following instruction without backtalk or arguments.
- **I will respect** others with my words. I will not use abusive words or profanity, and I will not be overly critical. I also will not gossip about our youth group or others.
- **I will respect** the group and turn my cell phone in when the youth activities begin because I know that they can distract others and myself.
- **I will respect** others in the way that I dress. I understand that dressing modestly is what is expected of me.
- **I will respect** the safe environment of the youth group by never bringing any weapons, drugs, alcohol or fireworks with me when I am with any members of our youth group.
- **I will respect** the leaders and the youth group by participating in all lessons, activities and games planned for the group and by arriving on time.
- **I will follow all rules as explained in the discipline policy.**

Because I am a youth, I understand that I do not have to be responsible for enforcing the rules. I understand that is the responsibility of all of the adults present, not me. I will, however, be an example to others.

# First United Methodist Youth Ministry Discipline Policy

While trying to create fun, relevant, and exciting activities for students, we must also create a safe environment where students can grow and exercise their faith. Therefore, we have created policies to deal with problems in the following areas. These policies are not meant to curb the enjoyment or creativity of students or workers but are provided to let everyone know what behavior is expected. We expect everyone to learn, remember, and abide by the policies. Although we do not anticipate having to use the disciplinary actions outlined, we are prepared to do so. We have found that when students know what is expected of them, we have very few problems and are able to create the warm and nurturing environment described above.

**1. Disruptions During Meetings:** We are able to have a good time, joke, and have fun in our meetings. Some students, however, occasionally take it too far and disrupt our meetings, causing other students to be distracted from the Bible teaching. In these cases, we follow these progressive disciplinary steps:

- Disruptive students will be separated from their friends. Our workers are to move the disruptive students to another seat, away from their friends.
- After being separated on any given week, if the student continues with the negative behavior, the student will be asked to leave the meeting and an adult worker will phone the parents/guardians to pick up the student early.
- If, when the student returns the next time, he or she continues the disruptive pattern, the student will be given a cooling off period away from youth ministry activities for one week.
- If, the student causes further disruption when returning from a cooling off period, we will put them in our 4' x 4' room called, "the Hole," for 2 weeks. Just kidding. Seriously, if the student can't get it together, he or she will be asked to meet with the Youth Pastor together with his or her family to discuss further action.

**2. Students who are under the influence of or in possession of illegal drugs or alcohol or students possessing weapons or tobacco:**

- If a student uses or is in possession of tobacco products the tobacco will be taken away and destroyed. The student's parents will also be notified.
- If a student comes to any youth ministry class or activity and a.) is noticeably under the influence of drugs or alcohol or b.) has possession of illegal drugs, alcohol or weapons, we will immediately report the incident to the student's parents, send the student home, and enforce a cooling off period from all youth ministry activities for two to four weeks depending on the severity of the situation. Such incidents will also be reported to the church leadership. If recommended by the church leadership and/or

required by law, the police and/or other authorities will also be contacted. Professional counseling will be recommended.

**3. Leaving the supervisory presence of the youth ministry staff (i.e. leaving the youth center, leaving the church, leaving the group during trips, etc.):**

Sometimes students try to leave the supervisory presence of adult workers so they can avoid group activities, talk on a cell phone, smoke, couple off, or leave the premises. We cannot allow this behavior because parents trust us to be responsible custodians of their children, and we can't be responsible when students leave our presence.

- Therefore students are not permitted to leave the youth center during our meetings. Those who leave the youth center or the church premises will face the following progression of disciplinary steps.
- If a student leaves the church building (but not the church premises)
  - On the first offense, the student will be issued a verbal warning
  - On the second offense, the students parents will be notified
  - If there is a third offense, the student will be given a one week suspension
  - If the problem persists, the student and their family will be asked to meet with the church leadership to discuss further action
- Students may leave the premises before the end of classes and activities only if the youth ministry staff has been notified by the parents or guardians in person or by phone. If a student leaves the premises without permission:
  - On the first offense, the parents will be notified
  - If there is a second offense, the student and their family will be asked to meet with the church leadership to discuss further action
- If a student leaves the group during a trip, disciplinary action will be taken during the trip, and depending on the severity of the situation, a student may be given a cooling off period from youth activities and/or banned from one or more future trips. Parents may be asked to pick up the student from the trip wherever the group may be.
- Students also may not leave a trip or activity early with a person other than a parent or guardian unless the youth ministry staff has been notified in advance by the parents or guardians in person or by phone

#### 4. Divisiveness, Arguing, and Vulgarity

- We do not tolerate arguing, contention, or any kind of negative speech. Even small pockets of division have major effects on the group, destroying the collective witness of the Body of Christ.
- When disruptive division or arguing occurs, both parties will be asked to meet with the youth ministry staff to mediate the conflict. Students who will not own up to their roles in the conflicts and attempt to exist peaceably with the other students will face the same disciplinary steps discussed below in section five. Typically, we allow students' emotions to cool for one week before we take any disciplinary action for lack of reconciliation.
- We do not tolerate any vulgarity at our church. If a student is caught using any kind of unacceptable language (cursing, racial slurs, using the Lords name in vain, etc...) the following steps will be taken:
  - On the first offense, the student will be issued a verbal warning
  - On the second offense, the students parents will be notified
  - If the problem persists, the student and their family will be asked to meet with the church leadership to discuss further action

#### 5. **Respect for Adults and Others:** Students attending our church are expected to show high levels of respect to all other attendees, young or old. Disrespect, especially towards any adult, will NOT be tolerated.

- On the first offense, the student will be issued a verbal warning.
- On the second offense, the parents will be notified.
- If the problem persists, the student will be suspended for one week.

#### 6. **Physical Bullying or Fighting:** Would you send your child to a meeting knowing there's a good chance he or she will get assaulted? Not likely. Parents need to know they are leaving their child in a safe environment. To that end, we do not permit physical fighting--period. Students who engage in physical bullying or fighting will face the following steps:

- The students will be asked to leave the meeting or activity and an adult worker will phone the parents/guardians to pick up the students early. The situation will be discussed with the parents and the students will be given a cooling off period away from all youth ministry activities for one week.
  - The student will be expected to meet with the youth pastor in order to return to the group

- If the problem happens again, the Youth and Senior pastors will meet with the student and their family to discuss further action.

## **7. Physical Displays of Affection, Sexual Harrassment, and Sexual Misconduct**

- We do not permit tickling, wrestling, piggyback rides or inappropriate touching (which means: do not touch anyone anywhere that a bathing suit would cover). In addition, physical displays of affection such as kissing, full body hugs, sitting on laps, and lying or sleeping next to each other are inappropriate and being isolated or alone with another student is not allowed.
  - On the first offense, the student will be issued a verbal warning
  - On the second offense, the students will be separated
  - If there is a third offense, the parents will be notified
- Students who engage in sexual harassment or sexual misconduct will be counseled by the youth ministry staff, their parents will be notified, and the students will be sent home. In addition, there will be a suspension which will be determined based on the severity of the situation. The church leadership will also be notified. If recommended by the church leadership and/or required by law, the police and/or other authorities will also be contacted.

## **8. Inappropriate Clothing:** Students are not permitted to wear clothing that is sexually suggestive or spiritually degrading. T-shirts or other clothing with evil, vulgar, illegal, or inappropriate content will not be permitted. Our group adheres to the 4 B's; no butts, no bellies, no breasts, and no boxers. In other words, dress modestly and appropriately at all times. If you are wearing leggings, your shirt must cover your entire bottom at all times.

- Those deemed to be wearing inappropriate clothing by the youth ministry staff to youth activities, trips or classes will be given a shirt or other clothing to cover up for the remainder of the event.
- If the student becomes a repeat offender, their parents will be notified. If the inappropriate dress continues, further disciplinary actions may be taken.

**9. Use of Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices tend to cause disruptions in our meetings and isolation of individuals. Therefore, the use of cell phones or other personal electronic or entertainment devices is prohibited during activities and services.

- Cell phones will be collected before students enter the youth area each week. Parents will be notified of this in advance and will be able to contact students when needed by contacting one of the adults.
- Special rules apply to trips: Bringing these devices on trips is highly discouraged and according to the needs of the trip is sometimes prohibited. On some trips the devices are allowed but may only be used during designated times. If students choose to bring such devices on approved trips, they do so at their own risk. The youth ministry staff does not take responsibility for the safe return of these items.
- Devices used during undesignated times, whether on the church premises or on trips, will be confiscated until the end of the service, trip or event. Continued offenses may result in further disciplinary actions.

#### **10. Teen Drivers**

- Students who are old enough to drive may drive to or from youth events, however, they must also adhere to the policies on staying with the group. Being a driver does not allow the student to leave campus before an event ends. (If the student needs to leave early for a valid reason, the Youth Pastor will need to be informed in person or over the phone by that student's parent)
- Students wishing to get a ride home with a teen driver that did not bring them to the event will need to receive permission from their parents before leaving with that student.
- If the youth group is going on a trip together, teen drivers are not permitted to drive any youth for any reason while on the trip.

#### **11. Return after Suspension from Youth Activities**

- Students wishing to return to youth ministry activities after a cooling off period or suspension will be asked to meet with the youth minister and/or youth ministry staff before returning so that appropriate behavior expectations may be reviewed and the student can have a chance to express their intentions to do better.