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Our Purpose and Vision

Purpose

The stated purpose of Fellowship church is the following:

“Fellowship Church exists, by the grace of God, and for the glory of God, to know Christ and to make him known in Louisville and to the ends of the Earth.”

As the student ministry at Fellowship Church, we submit to this as the main purpose of Fellowship Student Ministry (FSM). Our purpose is to fulfill the purpose of Fellowship Church within the specific demographic of 12-18 year old students.

Vision

Our vision is twofold:

- 1) to see middle and high school students mature into thriving, lifelong disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) to partner with parents in the equipping of their middle and high school students to be lights in a dark world as mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

Five Foundations of Student Ministry

Successful ministries are all built on the firm foundation of Christ and his word. Out of a desire to rightly minister according to God’s word, we have pulled together five different foundations that we believe are essential to effective student ministry. These foundations are adapted from Rooted Ministry,

Five Foundations for Student Ministry

1. **Gospel Centrality**- the gospel is the good news that God graciously saves all sinners who would turn from their sin and place their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone for their forgiveness and restoration. We faithfully proclaim the good news of God’s unconditional love for sinners through Christ.

2. **Theological Depth** - we believe the Bible is God’s inerrant and inspired Word. It is God’s special revelation of himself and is sufficient to provide us with all that we need for life and godliness. It is our supreme authority for life and doctrine. As such, we seek to submit all teaching and activity of Fellowship Student Ministry to the authoritative Scriptures. We also aim to teach our students to rightly handle and treasure Scripture for themselves as they pursue being disciples of Jesus Christ. Through expository, biblical teaching, we seek to equip students with a biblical worldview.

3. Relational Discipleship - we pursue all facets of ministry in the context of caring relationships with students and between students. One of the desires of FSM is to cultivate a community where students can build relationships with one another in a joyful and gospel-saturated environment. This community will also be characterized as a space for students to process their lives, thoughts, questions, and doubts alongside their peers and mature, adult members of Fellowship Church. Lastly, this is a community which will be characterized by safety for students and adults alike. We strive for a community of safety and inclusivity, while maintaining our biblical convictions. Students and adults can expect that all volunteers have had thorough background checks, MinistrySafe training, and additional training in safe student ministry practices.

4. Partnering with Parents- while we strongly reject the idea that the discipleship of teens is only their parents' responsibility, we do believe God has structured the household in such a way that parents are to play a primary and unique role in the discipleship of their children. As such, FSM does not seek to replace the role of the parents in discipleship, but rather seeks to partner with parents as co-champions of their teens' faith by creating resources to strengthen and supplement the discipleship that is happening in the home. We strive to educate, equip, and collaborate with parents in the discipleship of their teens.

5. Intergenerational Integration - we do not segregate students from the church body as a whole, but include them among the generations of the church. While there is a place for age-specific ministry in the church, we see the immense value of all the generations of the church coming together for worship, discipleship, and community. Therefore, we do not schedule student ministry events over church-wide events. We will seek to incorporate the students in men's and women's ministry events. We will treat our students with honor and respect, raising them up as the next generation of disciples in the church.

Volunteer Onboarding Process

There are a few different ways that people can serve in the student ministry:

- **Small Group Leaders:** lead a weekly small group for teens at a host home. Their main role will be to guide a small group of teens (8-12 students) through a Bible study. The general structure of these small group times of that we start the evening by hanging out or playing a game, then we have a Bible study through a specific passage of scripture, then end the night by praying together. This is just a general structure though, as every specific group looks a little different! These groups are split up by age and gender (middle/high school boys and middle/high school girls).
- **Ignite leaders:** Once a month, the student ministry gathers all together at PCS for a more traditional youth group setting. During this time, we share a meal together, play games, and worship through singing and the study of God's word. The best way to think of the teaching time here is like a Sunday School class. Exposition of God's word is done in a more interactive setting, with a leader guiding everybody through a passage or topic. The key role of Ignite leaders will be as discussion facilitation at tables.

The two above volunteers are the regular service roles that we need filled. However, there are also a variety of other ways you can serve in Fellowship Student Ministry if you do not have a regular schedule you can commit to:

- **Meals:** food is such an important aspect of the ministry of FSM. This is not because you cannot do helpful ministry without food (how ridiculous would that be), but because food is such a vital tool for fellowship and gathering people together. Jesus tells us to break bread often for a reason! We need a group of people who are able to help us provide food for events that happen throughout the year.
- **Prayer:** a ministry will not be successful without regular prayer. The prayer team commits to praying for individuals in the student ministry, reading through a monthly prayer guide of specific requests, and generally checking in with students or parents about the things they have been praying for.
- **Mentoring:** one-on-one mentoring is something I wish I took advantage of as a teenager. This is where older men and women meet with teens in a public setting for one-on-one discipleship. This can look different from person to person, but the overall goal of this is to individually encourage and edify one student in their faith. Volunteers who engage in this will commit to meeting regularly with a student and communicating with that student, their family, and the director of student ministry.

- Host Homes: small groups and other events would not be able to happen if we did not have homes to host them at. Host homes will graciously host students ministry events, whether it is our weekly small groups or another irregular event. Because we do not have a building we can go to for small groups or events, having a set of families that are willing and able to use their homes for small groups is vital for the success of this ministry!

To be a Fellowship Student Ministry volunteer, the volunteer must be a member of Fellowship Church in good standing. Additionally, he/she must have completed each of the steps of the onboarding process as follows:

1. Submit to a criminal background check.
2. Read the Fellowship Students' Handbook (this document)
3. Complete a MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training
4. Complete small group leader training (if applicable)

FSM Programming

The following is an overview of some of the programs and events that we offer through FSM. There are numerous opportunities we create where teenagers can gather with other students for a time of bible study and fellowship aimed at helping them know and grow in the truths of the gospel. Through one-on-one and small group discipleship, students can begin sharing life with trained ministry team leaders who are committed to coming alongside teenagers for the sake of eternal gospel impact. Other special events occur from time to time outside these listed below.

Sunday Small Groups - Our small groups are the bread and butter of Fellowship Student Ministry. These groups occur weekly on Sunday evenings and are separated by age and gender. These groups occur during a 2-hour block of time, during which we enjoy time together, read and talk about a specific passage of scripture, and pray for one another and others in our church. These groups are designed to give students a space to study God's word in depth with their peers, develop relationships with one another, grow in the spiritual disciplines of meditation, prayer, and Bible reading, and guide students to see that God's word matters for our lives right now!

Ignite - Ignite is a monthly gathering where all of our small groups come together for a more traditional youth group gathering. During this gathering, we have a time of food, games, and fellowship, and then transition to a formal teaching time. When we are able to have worship, we will! This teaching time is less of sermon and more of a discussion-based Sunday School class. Teaching during this time will generally be more topical, focusing on a cultural issue of the day or a theological question that students are asking in their small groups. Volunteers for Ignite can expect to lead some short discussions with a table.

Festive Fridays - This monthly event is designed to be a time for students to simply enjoy time together. As a student ministry, we are committed to growing in relationship with one another and one of the best ways to do this is to share a meal together. Therefore, we want to provide a regular time for students to simply eat and enjoy one another's company. These will be held on the third Friday of every month at a different family's home. A themed meal will be prepared by the host and other families based off a monthly theme (things like "tailgate" or "Christmas"). Some prizes and activities will be made as well for each occasion.

Retreat and Camp - These events offer students the opportunity to get away from the distractions of everyday life and be refreshed with other believers. These events are also a great time for students to connect deeper with their leaders and fellow students. When applicable, specific details are provided throughout the year.

Volunteer Expectations and Commitments

For team health, unity, and functionality, for the sake of the Gospel, and for the good of the students in our ministry, we believe that those who serve as leaders within Fellowship Student Ministry (FSM) should be Christian leaders who live exemplary lives. The following is a list of mutual commitments we make to one another for service in this ministry:

We can attest that we:

- Believe that serving within the student ministry is how God is currently calling us and has gifted us to serve him and Fellowship Church.
- Are current, active members of Fellowship Church, and as such are professing, baptized believers, maintain doctrinal unity with the church, and are committed to this local body in its unique mission and vision in serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Will commit to being an active part of a Fellowship Gospel Community Group. Both we and our GCG leaders can attest that our character is above reproach, mature, and fit for leadership.

We commit to:

- Selflessly love one another, the students in our care, and our church body, to the glory of God.
- Intentionally engage students during events, remembering that this ministry primarily exists for their edification, not our socialization.
- Faithfully attend the church's stated worship services and Vision Nights, faithfully give our tithes and offerings, and otherwise strive to fulfill the commitments of the church membership covenant we affirmed when we became members of Fellowship Church.
- Strive to live continually exemplary and commendable lives of godliness.
- Strive to be exemplary in our repentance - quickly admitting fault, seeking restoration and reconciliation when necessary, and cleave to the Gospel for our failures and sins.
- Strive to spend regular time in God's word and prayer, thereby cultivating a deeper knowledge of God and nurturing a heart of worship.
- Regularly pray for this ministry and the church.
- Faithfully respond to communication in a timely manner.
- Arrive at all gatherings to which we have committed on time.
- Notify the director with at least two weeks' notice for any non-urgent, planned absences.
- Foster a "feedback culture" - freely welcoming and offering feedback to improve our ministry to the students and families of Fellowship Church.

Leadership

The FSM Ministry Team has a few regular meeting times that a volunteer should expect to make themselves available for:

1. Bimonthly Huddle - As an FSM ministry leader, you will regularly meet with the Director of Student Ministry at an agreed upon time. In these regular check-ins, the Director of Student Ministry and the volunteer will discuss student care, upcoming events, and any questions or concerns about the student ministry. This meeting is for your own self-care as an FSM volunteer and is required as a volunteer.
2. Annual Student Ministry Planning Meeting - The student ministry calendar is from September-August. During the summer months, there will be a student ministry planning meeting weekend. This meeting includes yearly assessments, vision casting, and next year's calendar planning and budget projection. All student ministry volunteers must attend.

Student Discipleship: Follow up and new student assimilation

When a new student visits FSM for the first time in a Sunday evening gathering, the following process should be completed:

1. Have the guest will out a welcome card.
2. A student ministry leader is to send a text message within 48 hours with a simple thank you and invite to join us at our next gathering. i.e. "Thanks for coming to hang out with us last night! We hope to see you again this weekend for small groups on Sunday!"
3. The Director of Student Ministry will send an automated email to the student's parent within 48 hours.
4. The same student ministry leader and one additional student will send a text message the day before the next gathering time as an additional invite.

Student Discipleship: Drifters

When a student has been excessively absent or missing from our FSM gatherings, a student ministry leader should:

1. Send a text message to reach out and let them know they have been missed.
2. If a student has missed multiple weeks, encourage student with a phone call and reach out to a parent via email or phone call.
3. If a student has missed multiple events and more than a month of gathering time, reach out and schedule a one-on-one meet up in a public space.

Partnering with Parents

The Student Ministry of Fellowship Church knows that a huge part of discipleship happens in the home. Parents, for better or worse, have a profound influence on the lives of their teenagers. How a young person thinks and acts is shaped and modeled by his or her home life. This means that a crumbling foundation of faith among Gen Z is as much an issue for parents as it is for the church. To make disciples out of the next and ever- drifting generation, parents and the church must join like never before. This is why Fellowship Students is committed to:

- **Biblical, Family-Focused Discipleship** (Deut. 6:4-7, Eph. 6:4)
- **Cooperation not competition** between student ministry leaders and parents
- **G.U.T.T. Checks** - Parents should expect and encourage pastoral counsel and soul care for their teen from all of our student ministry leaders. We aren't afraid of hard, honest, conversations about a student's heart. But we also promise to always enter into those spaces with a spirit of **Grace, Unity, Truth, and Trust**.
- **Equipping Parents for Kingdom-Living in a Post-Christian Culture**

Without parents it would be hard to make a student ministry possible. We are here for you just as much as we are here for your teenager! Thank you for entrusting us with the soul care of your child! We hope to honor you by building our sacred trust through partnership and open communication. Here's what that looks like:

ASSURANCE - All adult student ministry volunteers are trained and equipped to initiate and keep open lines of communication between you and your student. Don't be alarmed when an adult leader is just as interested in connecting with you as your child. We want you to know the adult leaders who are shaping your teenagers' lives.

AVAILABILITY - Navigating life with a teenager is not for the unprepared. Our adult ministry volunteers know this. They are a grace-gift given to you as a member of Fellowship Church! Utilize them and find ways to co-disciple your children together. They want to make themselves available to you as they lead your students in the years ahead.

ACCOUNTABILITY - We strive to keep every parent informed about their teenager and offer biblical counseling from every person in our ministry. You can expect some regular spiritual check-ins (both good and bad) of what we see in your students as well as opportunities to collaborate in how best to reach your student for the most gospel-impact.

Reporting Abuse/Policy Violation

Abuse Tolerance: Our church has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at this church to act in the best interest of students in every program. If staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors or suspected abuse, it is their personal responsibility to report their observations to the Director of Student Ministry or another Fellowship Church pastor.

Reporting: Our church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for students and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to our pastors and the Police Department, Child Protective Services or other appropriate agency. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report "grooming" behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or Fellowship pastor.

Relevant Contacts:

National Domestic Abuse Hotline	(800) 799-7233
To report child abuse or neglect, call one of these numbers	(877) 597-2331 (800) 752-6200
Non-emergency report of abuse	https://prd.webapps.chfs.ky.gov/reportabuse/home.aspx
Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention	https://ecap.net/

Response: The pastors of Fellowship will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Consequence of Abuse/Policy Violation

Per Fellowship Church's zero tolerance for abuse, any person accused of committing abuse at any student ministry event, within student ministry facilities, will be prohibited from participation in any areas of ministry involving children or teenagers. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective Services. Any person found to have committed abuse, along with any legal steps that will take place, will also be prohibited from any future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, teenagers, or vulnerable populations of our church.

While abuse always correlates to policy violation, policy violation does not always correlate to abuse. Therefore, policy violations should be reported and each violation will be taken on a case-by-case basis. Repeat offenders will be temporarily suspended or indefinitely prohibited from participation in activities and programming involving children, teenagers, or vulnerable populations from Fellowship Church.

Leader and Student Boundaries

Never Be Alone with a Student: Student ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being with an individual youth in any room, building, or vehicle at Fellowship Church except in cases of one-on-one discipleship as outlined below. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single youth, that staff member or volunteer is to remove themselves and take action to be in a room or building occupied by others or to a location easily observed by others.

Group Ratios: For every 30 students, there will be a minimum of 3 unrelated volunteers. For every additional 15 students, 1 volunteer will be required. These are minimum ratio requirements.

Report Dangerous Situations: If a student ever says "I need to tell you something, but you can't tell anyone" - never agree. Let them know that you'll need to inform a Fellowship Church staff member or pastor if the student is being hurt, may hurt themselves, or may hurt someone else. Report any of these cases (proven or potential) to a Fellowship Church staff member immediately.

One-on-one Discipleship

Please note that part of our ministry is 1-1 and small group discipleship. But a meeting of this nature should never take place without your knowledge and consent as parents.

The following guidelines should be followed for Outside Discipleship:

- Our leaders will never set up a 1-1 meeting with any student without the knowledge and consent of you as their parents. Leaders know they are to ask parents and give them all details before making plans with a student.
- Outside Discipleship Meetings should take place in a visible, public area (e.g. coffee shops, restaurants, visible areas). Adult leaders should never meet with a student in a private home. The location should be within a couple miles of the church or student's home or school so there is no long-distance traveling for one-on-one meetings.
- Our leaders should not transport a student alone if at all possible unless a parent has given specific written consent (email, written note, text message).

Best practices for Fellowship Students' leaders include having a volunteer text a parent at the time of picking up and dropping off.

Social Media Use and Electronic Communication

In this day and age, there are more ways than ever before to have one-on-one interactions with students that aid in the discipleship process. While we do not want to remove all potentially helpful resources and means of outreach and communication, we must be wise in our use of them - for the safety of our students and to protect our staff and volunteers. With that in mind, here are the Fellowship Student Ministry policies for social media and electronic communication.

Phone calls: Phone calls are allowed between a leader and a student, but never after 9:00pm. Leaders are not to call a student if the conversation can wait or be had in a public place or the next time they are on campus.

Texting and social media messages: Texting is only allowed between a student and leader if it pertains to student ministry activities or direct discipleship that has been established through our ministry. Best practice is to use a group message whenever possible. This looks like a group message with at least two student ministry leaders. You may interact with students via social media such as following on Instagram, but you may not communicate via Snapchat with students and there are to be no personal DMs on any apps whatsoever. (Likes or other acknowledgements are fine). All interactions on social media should be limited to public comments and wall posts - never private messages.

Keep a log of all electronic conversations: You are responsible for keeping records of all electronic conversations you engage in with students. Take screen shots, paste text into a word document, save text messages and emails. This may seem excessive but if you're ever falsely accused of misconduct from a student or parent, you'll be thankful for the extra safety measures.

Physical Contact

Fellowship Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, we are implementing a physical contact policy which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our student ministry. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the student ministry:

- Side hugs, pats on the back, high-fives, and other forms of appropriate physical touch are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact should be immediately reported to the Director of Student Ministry.

- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the student and never based upon the emotional needs of a leader or volunteer.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by staff or volunteers must be reported immediately to the Director of Student Ministry or a pastor.

Transportation Policy

Volunteers may from time to time provide transportation for students. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of students:

- Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place are never allowed. No student can be alone with a student ministry leader in the car, unless explicit written permission has been granted from the parent.
- No cell phones should be utilized by the driver of the vehicle while transporting students.
- No drivers under the age of 18 may drive for Fellowship Students.
- Students may not drive other students unless they are siblings or parent/guardians have given prior consent.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

In one-on-one discipleship, there is an understanding that a student may bring this subject matter up to the leader or volunteer discipling them. This is allowed with the understanding that the adult's perspective will convey Fellowship Church's views/positions on these topics. No leader or volunteer is permitted to discuss inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationship, dating, or sexual activities with any student outside of an on-topic teaching moment. There is also the expectation that from time to time, student ministry discussion and lessons may address age-appropriate issues related to purity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the students the church's view/positions on these topics. Parents should be notified in advance of these lessons.

Sleeping Arrangements

Many student activities such as retreats, conferences, or camps may require overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students. In the event an activity requires overnight accommodations, the following rules are to be strictly observed:

- Students and leaders will be given separate sleeping quarters whenever possible.
- If separate sleeping quarters are unavailable, the 2-adult nonrelated rule must be followed. The 2 adult leaders present must have previously completed the screening process for all Fellowship Students Ministry volunteers.
- Overnight sleeping arrangements will be made by the Director of Student Ministry prior to the activity and will have been reviewed by at least one other Fellowship Church staff member.
- Appropriate sleeping attire must be worn at all times.

Resources

On Philosophy of Ministry of Fellowship Students:

- Gospel Centered Youth Ministry: A Practical Guide by Cameron Cole & Jon Nielson
- The Jesus I Wish I Knew in High School
- A Biblical Theology of Youth Ministry by Mike McGarry
- Deep Discipleship by J.T. English
- The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-shift that Changes Everything by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne
- Rooted Ministry: Gospel Centered Ministry to Teenagers
- Youth Pastor Theologian

On Student Evangelism:

- Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out by Alvin Reid
- Before You Share Your Faith: Five Ways to be Evangelism Ready by Matt Smethurst

On Student Discipleship:

- Lead Them to Jesus: A Handbook for Youth Workers by Mike McGarry
- Discover: Questioning Your Way to Faith by Mike McGarry
- How to Eat Your Bible by Nate Pickowicz
- Spiritual Disciples for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney

On Mental Health, Anxiety, and Depression:

- Why am I Feeling Like This?: A Teen's Guide to Freedom from Anxiety and Depressing by David Murray

On Gender and Sexuality:

- Gay Girl, Good God: The Story of Who I Was and Who God Has Always Been by Jackie Hill Perry
- Is God Anti-Gay?: And Other Questions about Jesus, the Bible, and Same-Sex Sexuality by Sam Allberry
- Born Again This Way: Coming Out, Coming to Faith, and What Comes Next by Rachel Gilson
- Love Thy Body by Nancy Pearcey
- What God Has to Say about Our Bodies by Sam Allberry

On Youth Pop-Culture and Current Issues:

- CPYU.org (Center for Parent/Youth Understanding)
- Commonsensemedia.com for trusted media ratings created with families in mind
- Axis.org (website and parent resources)
- 10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity by Rebeca McLaughlin
- Following Jesus in a Digital Age by Jason Thacker

On Biblical Studies and Theology:

- ESV Study Bible or CSB Study Bible
- Before You Open Your Bible: Nine Heart Postures for Approaching God's Word by Matt Smethurst
- Do You Believe? By Paul David Tripp
- Why Trust the Bible? By Greg Gilbert
- God's Big Picture by Vaughan Roberts