

CREATING A COVENANT

Anytime you bring together a group of people for collective work or for an intense event like the LCMS Youth Gathering, it can be helpful to create a covenant. Simply put, a covenant is an agreement. Throughout the Old Testament, we see covenants being made between God and His people (Genesis 15:18–21; Genesis 17:1–8; Exodus 6:1–5). We also celebrate the New Covenant Jesus made with us (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). While we as sinners will never fulfill all our agreements to each other, we trust that God works through us to reflect His love and care to others. Covenants can set a foundation of care and love which guide how people treat one another as God intended.

As you formulate your covenant, it will be important to keep in mind your specific group dynamics. What may be pertinent for one youth ministry, may not need consideration by another.

A few key components

- Your covenant should be created **BY** your group, **FOR** your group. Let your participants have a say in the items included. By making them part of the process, they are more apt to follow and enforce the rules.
- Sometimes the covenant is best worded in a broad way, and others it needs to be specific to ensure everyone clearly understands the expectations. As you navigate this, you may let youth put in small, specific, or even silly things to ensure the group is collaboratively setting guidelines.
- Don't overwhelm your participants. Choose carefully what you include but make it reasonable for them to remember and follow. Set them up for success.
- Be sure your adults are part of the process, agree to abide by the same expectations as youth, and sign it too.

Covenant Suggestions

Consider potential scriptural pieces and broader pieces that are helpful in designing a covenant.

- 10 Commandments and parts of their meanings from the Small Catechism
- If we have a conflict with someone in our group, we will resolve it promptly through both challenge and grace.
- We will live out Philippians 2:4 in our group, "...look(ing) not to our own interests, but also to the interests of others."
- We will live out Ephesians 4:32 in our group, "Be(ing) kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."
- We will focus on why we are participating, how God is teaching us, and living out our God-given vocations.



- We commit to being respectful of the hotel and each other's property. Property is a gift from God, and we break the commandments when we damage or destroy it. Instead, we seek to be ambassadors for our church and Christ.
- We will represent Jesus in our dress, speech, and behavior. God desires us to live according to His law and we recognize this as an opportunity to witness to and share His love with others. (This may be a piece where it would be good to articulate specifics or examples for your group.)

Consider logistical and communication pieces as well.

- We will stay in groups of 4 or more.
- We will be with an adult when we move from one building to another (hotel to the convention center, hotel to mass transit, convention center to meals, etc.)
- We will stay in our hotel after our last evening activity until breakfast time.
- If guys need to be in a girls' room or girls need to be in a guys' room, the door will be propped open. ORAs event participants, we agree to have adult supervision while in hotel rooms when mixed genders are present.
- We will make a plan for each day and communicate with our Adult Leaders about where we are going.
- We will be respectful of those in our group, our Adult Leaders, event authorities and those we encounter along the way.
- We will pay attention to the time and be prompt for group gatherings.
- We will respond cheerfully when we are reminded to drink more water.
- We will take care of our bodies by eating enough food to sustain us and wearing appropriate clothing to be comfortable and fully engaged in the programming.
- We will respond cheerfully when we need to stand in yet another long line.
- We will follow the guidelines of the facilities, hotel, and city and encourage others to do the same.
- We commit to prioritizing the safety of others and ourselves, so that we can focus on our relationship with God in this environment.
- We commit to trusting and communicating with our leaders this weekend.
- We commit to welcoming and including others and building friendships.
- We commit to having fun in Jesus' name.
- We understand that illegal activity, including underage drinking and drug use, by event participants is prohibited both on- and off-site during the event. We also encourage Adult Leaders to follow the example of event hosts and abstain from consuming alcohol during the event to emphasize the importance of the example they set.
- We will report any illness or personal emergency to our group leader. If we cannot find our group leader or need additional help, we will go to Gathering representative or security personnel.
- We understand that if we break or damage anything at the event hotel, we are responsible for working with the hotel and fully paying for the repair.



- If we choose not to follow these rules and regulations, we understand and accept the consequences decided upon by our Adult Leaders and/or Gathering representatives. We suggest the consequences be consistent and grace-based. Adult Leaders and parents will want to understand the consequences prior to the Gathering. This includes what behavior might require a person to return home.
- We agree to abide by the guidelines stated above and to help one another abide by them as well.

Parent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____



Technology Covenant Suggestions

The extent to which participants can use their phones and other devices during the Gathering is at the discretion of their Adult Leaders. The use of cell phones and social media is meant to enhance the Gathering experience, not distract from it. Key points from the Gathering will be understood regardless of participants' use of these devices.

Things to consider may be:

It is not required that youth or adults have phones as a part of the Gathering programming. However, it's use may be helpful for example...

- Utilize the Gathering App to help personalize your Gathering experience. Build your schedule, check out Sessions and Speaker information, and learn about exhibitors and sponsors. (Additional gamification may be available at the time of the Gathering.) Take time during a Gathering planning meeting to download the app and have youth navigate it. *Please note the Gathering App will be made available for free in app stores in late spring 2025.*
- The Youth and Adult Poll will be accessible only on the Gathering App or in the Youth Booth on the Interactive Floor.
- Sharing photos and videos of your Gathering experience by using hashtags connected to the Gathering! You can find those hashtags and more by following LCMS Youth Gathering on most platforms.
- Some participants use their phones to access Bible apps which can light up in darker atmospheres. Discuss how these can be used appropriately and without distraction.

The Gathering encourages groups to set limits on screen times. Some groups will add a statement in their covenant that is agreed upon by all participants and leaders. A few examples follow these guidelines:

- Determine times when adults and youth will not use their phones, like Bible study, Community Group Time, Meals, Mass Events, or Worship.
- Talk about how they can keep phones off/silent at night to ensure they get good rest to enjoy each day.
- It is important that Adult Leaders model the behavior agreed upon by the group, and that parents know and are supportive of the guidelines the group is setting.
- You can even enforce this on some phones by setting time limits on social media app usage.
- You may need to pay for access to WIFI, such as planes and hotels. Due to the overwhelming number of users, prepare for free WIFI networks to be slow



The Gathering is a good place to demonstrate and teach social interaction. Consider setting the following boundaries for your group...

- Phones can be a distraction from being present, but it can be hard for us to disconnect. For some, phones give comfort when feeling anxious about being away.
- While some students might be using their phones for appropriate and healthy tasks, it's important to talk about how phone usage can impact relationships and how well you are listening to others.
- Some groups collect phones at different events including meals and Community Group time.
- Make a daily connection with parents/guardians at home and share a key moment in the day.
- As supportive adults watch your own phone usage. Have other adults or youth hold you accountable as well to make you are putting your phone away to engage with youth.
- Be fully present with your group and be prepared to adjust as necessary. Use discernment and adjust your cell phone covenant as necessary during the Gathering through conversation to ensure everyone is getting the most from their experience.

It's important to remember that teens have grown up with smart phones in their hands, and that 70% of young adults say they feel anxious without their phones¹. When you put regulations on phones, you are challenging not only usage, but potentially stirring emotions youth need help dealing with. Fear of missing out is a real thing and doesn't go away at the Gathering. Help students navigate this and support each other. This can be easier than you think since 60% believe their generation spends too much time on screens².

Covenant Suggestions

We Agree...

- that having a cell phone as a youth participant is a privilege and not a right.
- that I will honor no cell phone times established by my Adult Leaders.
- I will not give away my cell number or social media handles to strangers or leave it in places where it can be seen by strangers.
- I will be cautious about new followers or friend requests from people I don't know or who I have just met. I will not meet anyone I have just met online in person at the Gathering without an adult present.
- If I have a conflict, I will first address it with the youth and Adult Leaders at the Gathering, before contacting my parents back home. While parental support is important, disappointment and conflict are best dealt with in person as a group.
- that if I am asked to turn off my cell phone by any adult, I will do it with respect and not complain.
- when I am in conversation with a person or participating in a Gathering event, I will not use my phone.

¹ <https://lendedu.com/blog/millennials-anxiety-not-having-cell-phone>

² <https://www.barna.com/research/gen-z-screens/>



- that I will stay fully present in the Gathering experience instead of being distracted by social media or friends back home.
- that I will stay aware of my surroundings and be considerate of others in the city instead of being consumed by screens.
- that I will not post inappropriate photos or messages that speak negatively about myself or others.
- that if I receive an inappropriate message from someone, I will inform an Adult Leader.
- that I will remain positive about my experience while sending pictures, texting, on social media, or phone calls.
- that I will honor nighttime quiet times by shutting off my phone notifications from 11 pm-8 am.
- that I will leave my cell phone in my pocket or out of sight while at meals during the Gathering and not have it on the table.
- that if I lose or break my cell phone, I will be responsible for replacing or fixing it.

If I don't follow these statements, I will face the consequences of losing the privilege of my phone for an agreed upon amount of time.

Parent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

