



YOUTH MINISTRY PARENT HANDBOOK

DEAR PARENTS,

We want to, first of all, say thank you for allowing us to partner with you in the development of your child's spiritual formation. We consider it a great privilege that you entrust your kids into our care, whether that be for an hour on Sundays or for a week at summer camp.

The church is a bit counter-cultural when it comes to its goals in raising kids. Where our culture might prioritize getting kids on track for success by making a certain sports team, staying out of trouble, or being accepted into a good college, our priority for kids is that they meet and love Jesus. While we hope they become healthy, well adjusted adults we hope that beyond that they live a life devoted to God. But this is also a harder goal to accomplish. We need help from God, certainly, but we also need one another. That's where we come in!

In this handbook you'll find an overview of what it will look like for your child to be involved in youth ministry at Santa Barbara Community Church. A small note: you'll notice we use the terms "kid," "child," "teen," or "young person" throughout this handbook because while everyone in our program is a student at one of our local schools, we acknowledge they are so much more than *just* a student. Kids don't always want to be identified solely by their academic performance and we want church to be a place where they are known in their multi-facetedness, just as God knows them fully and perfectly.

With so much gratitude,
Caleb, Mandy & Katie

OUR MISSION

Our youth ministry exists to cultivate in young people a love for God, for His word, for His church, and for His world in order that they might be conformed into the image of Christ

WE PURSUE OUR MISSION BY:

Committing

- × To the consistent teaching of God's word in youth group and small groups
- × To the intentional pursuit of long-term discipleship relationships

Connecting

- × 5th-12th graders to one another through small groups with peers that are led by a mature believer
- × Young people to God's church, both local and global.

Equipping

- × Our youth for a life of evangelism and servant leadership
- × Young people to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God

ROLE OF A PARENT IN YOUTH MINISTRY

We think spending time with children and teenagers is one of the most important things adults can do. Children and Youth Ministry guru, Reggie Joiner puts it this way:

"A PARENT OR GUARDIAN HAS APPROXIMATELY 936 WEEKS WITH THEIR KID FROM THE DAY THEY'RE BORN UNTIL THE DAY THEY GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL. WHILE CHURCH LEADERS HAVE APPROXIMATELY 40 WEEKS A YEAR WITH STUDENTS WHEN YOU TAKE OUT HOLIDAYS, SICK DAYS, ETC."

So when you do the math, it's pretty clear that parents and guardians have the greatest amount of time and relational capital when it comes to teaching your kids to know and love Jesus. YOU are the ones on the frontlines. YOU are the ones picking your kids up after a hard day at school, listening to them at the dinner table, or tucking them in at night. With that being said, we as a youth ministry team see parents as the primary influencers in the faith formation of their kids, and we want to come alongside and partner with you in that effort.

CONNECTING

We usually have an informational parent meeting at the beginning of each school year. However during this season of COVID, we will be sharing ministry information with parents via videos and email, so be sure to check your inboxes for that! In this season especially please do not hesitate to call or email us with any questions or concerns you may have.

COMMUNICATING

Our primary mode of communicating with parents is via email but we are always available for in person meetings. Your child's small group leader will primarily communicate with you when they are in Junior High, then once in high school they communicate with your kids directly. We do encourage High School small group leaders to regularly inform parents of what their group is studying and any specific concerns that may arise.

WHAT IS 5TH/6TH MINISTRY?

Our 5th/6th program engages kids in new and meaningful ways as they transition from Sunday school to youth group. Developmentally, the pre-teen years are characterized by thinking that is concrete, linear, pragmatic and simplistic. They wrestle with questions of identity and autonomy and seek to discover where and to whom they belong. With this in mind, and in these uncertain times, we aim to teach them that they are sons and daughters of God and that they belong as members of the body of Christ. With this in mind,



SUNDAYS

Every Sunday we meet from 2:00-3:00 pm in the church amphitheater for youth group.

EVENTS

In this season, monthly events will not be calendered as they have been in the past. We will let you know as new activities and events arise as restrictions on meeting ease over time.

SMALL GROUPS

WHAT IS JUNIOR HIGH MINISTRY?

Starting in 7th grade, we put together groups of 4-8 kids with a leader who will walk with them through high school. In Junior High, small groups meet every other week and then move to meeting weekly in high school. Small groups are the cornerstone of our youth ministry, providing opportunity for long-term discipleship with a leader, fellowship with other students and the experience of pursuing your Christian life in community.

"SMALL GROUP IS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS IN MY LIFE. IT IS A SPACE I FEEL SAFE AND HEARD, AN IMPORTANT TOUCHPOINT IN MY WEEK. NOT TO MENTION IT'S A LOT OF FUN. THE RELATIONSHIPS I'VE MADE IN SMALL GROUP ARE IMPORTANT TO ME AND MY LEADER HAS INSPIRED ME TO BE AN INTENTIONAL, DEVOTED, AND GOD-LOVING PERSON. I LOOK UP TO HIM AND TO THE GUYS IN MY GROUP. MEETING WEEKLY IS SOMETHING I LOOK FORWARD TO AND I AM VERY THANKFUL FOR IT."

A sophomore boy reflecting on his small group experience

Junior High finds kids suddenly more impressionable and curious than at any other time in their lives. Add to this, the uncertainty and disappointment of living through a pandemic, and we can only imagine the host of emotions they are feeling! They go through a tremendous amount of internal and external change which leads to hypothesizing, emoting, self perceiving and general identity formation. On Sundays and in small groups, we aim to create environments where Junior Highers can seek Christ and unpack Biblical truths together. Junior High Ministry at SB Community seeks to offer consistency where there is tumult, empathy and acceptance where there is doubt, and instruct them on how to have a personal relationship with Jesus in the midst of all of it.



× **Sundays** - Every Sunday we meet from 2:00-3:00 pm in the church amphitheater for youth group.

× **Events** - In this season, monthly events will not be calendered as they have been in the past. We will let you know as new activities and events arise as restrictions on meeting ease as time goes on.

WHAT IS HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY?

Our high school ministry aims to be a space where teens feel like they belong and can be equipped to follow Jesus after they leave high school. Through our time on Sundays, small groups and events we hope to help young people integrate their faith into every area of their lives. There



are more frequent and a wider variety of options for engagement in high school ministry. In this unique season, we will continue to pursue opportunities for our high school students to be engaged with one another and our community.

SUNDAYS - in high school youth group we encourage young people to begin exploring their gifts and strengths in ministry. Student teams lead worship, games, times of sharing and give announcements on Sundays.

STUDENT LEADERS - juniors and seniors who are consistent members of our youth group and committed members of a small group are invited to apply to be student leaders in our ministry. They not only help support with events, worship ministries, welcoming visitors and mentoring underclassmen, they are also held to a higher standard in their conduct at school and in their friendships as ambassadors of Christ on their campuses.

CAMPS & SUMMER IN YOUTH MINISTRY

During the summer our junior high and high school ministries meet on Wednesday nights instead of Sundays. We hire interns who are then responsible for running all three levels of youth group. Summer youth group and the internship program offer an opportunity for college students and young adults to receive leadership and hands-on ministry experience, and allow the kids and teens in our ministry to hear from a variety of voices and witness people living out their faith into young adulthood.

Our youth ministries go to Forest Home for a weekend in the winter and a week in the summer. We've been going to Forest Home as a church since 1995. We love it there!

HS FALL RETREAT : OCTOBER 23-25

5/6 WINTER CAMP : JANUARY 29-31

JH WINTER CAMP : JANUARY 29-31

HS WINTER CAMP : FEBRUARY 26-28



*It is still unclear how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect both Fall Retreat and Winter Camp. Neither has been cancelled by Forest Home at this time, we will keep our families updated if that changes.

YOUTH MINISTRY STAFF



MANDY DUPAR YOUTH PASTOR - 5TH/6TH & JUNIOR HIGH

Mandy grew up just down the 101 in Ventura. She received her BA in Liberal Studies and Multiple Subject Teaching Credential from Azusa Pacific University. She moved to Seattle, WA in 2014 and quickly fell in love with youth ministry when she began working at Bellevue Presbyterian Church. After 3 years in Washington, she moved here to begin working with the youth ministry at Santa Barbara Community

Church. When she's not hanging out with students, you can most likely find her at a coffee shop or enjoying the outdoors with her dog, Lila.

CALEB BAGDANOV YOUTH PASTOR - HIGH SCHOOL

Caleb graduated from Westmont College and more recently completed his MA in Theology from Fuller Seminary in 2019. He met members of SB Community's youth group while working at Forest Home and got involved with our youth ministry from there. Since 2012 Caleb has gifted our ministry with a deep sense of empathy and has strived to make it a place where teens feel like they belong. A few things Caleb loves are being a youth pastor, his wife Marie, his son Simon, cycling, trail running, fly-fishing, and the Dodgers.



KATIE SHARA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATE

Katie received her BA in English from Westmont in 2013. She taught at Trinity Preschool for four years, helping develop their Bible curriculum and concurrently studying child development. Katie came on staff in 2018 after leading a small group for 8 years and has enjoyed helping oversee the high school ministry as well as the college ministry. You

can find her practicing yoga, running or surfing when she's not planning youth group or grabbing coffee with students.