



## TECHNOLOGY COVENANT

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.

### Congregational Things to Consider in Creating Cell Phone/Screen Time Covenants

1. Groups will use social media and phones as part of Gathering programming (Bible Study, Interactive Center, Sessions and Mass Events).
  - Share photos and videos of your Gathering experience by using hashtags connected to the Gathering on social media! You can find those hashtags and more by following LCMS Youth Gathering on most platforms.
  - The Gathering App will be a warehouse of information! See below for more info!
2. 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.
3. 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:
  - Make times every day where students do not use their phones, either during the day or at night once the group is back at the hotel after Mass Event.
  - Use your covenant as an opportunity to teach screen Sabbath time
  - Talk about 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.
  - You can even enforce this on some phones by setting time limits on social media app usage.



4. 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 for being present. It is hard for youth to disconnect from events/friends back home. For others, phones can give comfort to those 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.

*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 phones<sup>1</sup>. 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 screens<sup>2</sup>.*

5. 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.
6. Consider downloading content (music, movies and shows) before traveling.
7. 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.
8. 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.



9. 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 2022.*
- Consider making a challenge out of getting the most out of the Gathering app:
    - i. Click 2 speakers you want to see at the Gathering.
    - ii. Click 2 places in the Interactive Center you want to visit.
    - iii. Add others that are applicable to your group needs.

## Possible Covenant Statements

### We Agree... (Check all that are agreed upon)

- 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.
- that when I am in conversation with a person or participating in a Gathering event, I will not use my phone.
- 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 night time 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:** \_\_\_\_\_