



## COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS DURING THE GATHERING

### Why Communicate with Parents

For some parents, this may be the first time their child is away from them for an extended period. For many youth, this is the first time they are attending a Gathering or even traveling without a parent. Empowering students to be fully immersed in the Gathering means having limited, healthy communication with their parents. Adult leaders should set the tone with parents before they leave for the Gathering.

### Set Expectations before the Gathering

With cell phones, parents can be in continuous communication with their teen, even if they are miles apart. Too much or too little communication back home, even with well-intentioned parents, can be disruptive. Parents, teens, and adult leaders need to work together to set good boundaries. This allows youth can be present and focus on the experience they are having while still letting parents back home feel confident in their child's safety and get a glimpse of the Gathering experience. In planning meetings, set expectations about when parents should expect checks ins from their teen via text or call. For example, evening phone calls/texts might disrupt getting dinner or Mass Events which often end late, but lunchtime check ins might work better. Parents should have the cell numbers of the Primary Adult Leader and their child's community group leader before the group leaves. Primary Adult Leaders should be consistent and available to parents in case there is a concern, or if a teen is unresponsive or an extended period.

### Ways to Communicate with Parents

Adult leaders should proactively communicate with parents, to provide peace of mind for their safety and, more importantly, to engage them by sharing snippets of the Gathering experience. Here are a few ways to engage and communicate with parents:

- Use an application-based method to text all parents at the same time. Two good apps to use are GroupMe and Remind. (*Pro Tip: create the groups or classes before you leave for the Gathering. Create one group for parents, one group for students and adult leaders and one for adult leaders only. Communication is a breeze once those are set up*). Send parents daily pictures, video clips and Gathering highlights. This will give them a sense of what their kids are up to and keep them engaged.
- Create a Facebook group and encourage parents to join. Upload photos, video clips and Gathering highlights. This creates a permanent Gathering timeline, which could even be used to gather material to share with the congregation after the Gathering.



- Send daily emails to parents. Compile the email list before you leave for the Gathering. In addition to sending photos, include quotes from youth detailing takeaways and things they've found particularly impactful.
- Create a blog and post daily, uploading photos, video clips and Gathering highlights. Parents can read and comment on the posts.

There are many ways Adult Leaders can communicate with parents, while allowing their Youth to immerse themselves in the Gathering. Taking time before the Gathering to set expectations and set up methods of communication would be time well spent.