

 HEART OF GOD CHURCH

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICY



Launched 1.0 Oct 2011 (Updated Sep 2012, Jul 2013, Oct 2013, Nov 2013, Mar 2014, Oct 2015, Nov 2015) | **Revised Edition 2.0** Apr 2016 (Updated Jun 2018) |
Revised Edition 3.0 Nov 2019
Revised Edition 4.0 Sep 2023

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Introduction

1. Purpose of Policies

1.1 Culture and Core Values Articulated : Know why we do it

As a church, we want to reflect our culture and core values in the way we relate to people, approach situations and deal with problems that arise in our church life. These policies will help to articulate in a clearer and more systematic way what our culture and core values are. In other words, they set out why we do what we do.

1.2 Consistency Assured : Know what to do and how to do it

As the church grows and the leadership expands, it is important to ensure that there is still a consistent approach to situations and circumstances. Policies take personalities out of the picture so decisions are based on policies and not on the individual. Each situation will be dealt with thoughtfully and purposefully, reducing the possibility of problems arising due to inconsistency. Best practices are also developed as we strive towards our vision of becoming a world-class church in a first-world nation. As these policies will form the platform for training, this also ensures leaders and volunteers, especially newly appointed ones are sufficiently equipped to handle their responsibilities and they will now know how and what to do in the various situations they may encounter in their jobs and ministries.

1.3 Covering and Accountability : Protect what we do

Policies provide a layer of covering for our church congregation as the systems set up provide a safe and secure environment for all, especially the youth and children.

In addition, they assure the public and authorities that there are clearly stated systems and processes in place in our organization. With authorities defined, boundaries set, and responsibilities delegated, it is known to all who does the task, why it is done, and under what conditions it is done and helps to ensure the accountability of all involved. They also prepare the church to respond to emergencies swiftly and appropriately.

These policies also enable us to keep a lookout for each other so that if we observe behaviour that does not comply with the standards set, we know how we should respond and who we should inform.

Furthermore, it will minimize the likelihood that the church and those who work and volunteer in it could be subject to unwarranted accusation and suspicion. Basically, complying with these policies will go a long way in protecting what we do in church.

2. Disclaimer

These policies are not intended to create an implied or express contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

It should be noted that these policies are non-exhaustive, as it is impossible to anticipate and provide for every conceivable situation or circumstance that could possibly arise. It may be necessary to modify or depart from this policy in certain cases based on unique facts and circumstances, and Heart of God Church reserves the right to modify or depart from this policy where necessary.

3. Approval

These policies have been reviewed by the Governance, Risk and Compliance Sub-Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

4. Feedback

If there are any questions, feedback or suggestions for improvement, please contact us at policies@heartofgodchurch.org.

Youth Policy

1. Scope of Youth Policy (the “Policy”)

The people who are covered by this Policy are:

- 1.1 Young People: Below 21 years old
- 1.2 Youth: 16 years old and below/studying in secondary school
- 1.3 Children: 12 years old and below/studying in primary school

2. The principles which are covered in this Policy:

- (A) Belief in Youths
- (B) Promoting Strong Family Values
- (C) Partnership with Parents
- (D) Pro-Education Values
- (E) Partnership with Principals and Teachers
- (F) Financial Responsibility

3. Policy Principles

(A) Belief in Youths

- 3.1 Heart of God Church (the “Church”) believes that youth are leaders today, not just tomorrow. Our stand is that when we believe in youths and entrust them with responsibility, with guidance and nurturing, they will mature and rise up. We demonstrate this belief in youths by providing a nurturing environment for them to learn and grow, training and equipping them to serve others, as well as teaching habits and inculcating values that empower them to live out their fullest potential.

(B) Promoting Strong Family Values

- 3.2 We believe that the family is the cornerstone of society, as well as the basic societal unit that nurtures and moulds each person and his values. We believe in promoting strong family values, such as honouring and respecting one’s parents, loving and spending time with the family, as well as encouraging communication and understanding between generations.

Examples of how these pro-family values are implemented in the Church include:

- 3.2.1 Preaching sermons on wholesome family-related topics

Many of our sermons and teachings promote strong family values and other healthy themes such as gratefulness and loving others. As a result, youths learn to appreciate their parents and siblings more. There are many stories of how family relationships have improved and how families have drawn closer together after the youths took the values that they learnt in the Church and started applying them at home.

3.2.2 Planning family-friendly service timings and calendar

Our services are held on weekend afternoons so that youths can spend time with their parents through weekend lunches and dinners. We do not hold services during the Chinese New Year season to allow youths to spend time with their family.

3.2.3 Celebrating events such as Mother's Day and Father's Day

The Church encourages youths to proactively show love and appreciation to their parents, and provides creative ideas on how the youth can do so. We also give gifts of appreciation to the mothers and fathers in the congregation during Mother's Day and Father's Day services to honour and love them.

(C) Partnership with Parents

3.3 We respect parents and believe that when we work together in partnership with them, we can develop youths holistically to enhance their emotional, social, academic and spiritual well-being. We have a special ministry run by adult leaders called the Parental Involvement and Engagement Team (PIE) which focuses on promoting good relationships with the parents of our youths. Our HeartKidz teachers also maintain regular contact with interested and engaged parents.

3.4 The Church's stand is that the ultimate authority and responsibility for children and youth below the age of 21 years lie with their parents, and we respect their parents' wishes when it comes to certain major decisions in their lives:

3.4.1 Whether or not they should be water baptised.

Written parental consent is required for young people below the age of 21 years old who wish to get water baptised.

3.4.2 Whether or not they should attend church services and activities.

If it is the parents' desire that their youth should not attend church services, it is ultimately their authority and responsibility to ensure so. Upon making their requests reasonably to the Church, we will cooperate with the parents in this respect to the best of our ability.

Requests made to the Church need to be within reason, as it would be difficult for the church to accede to unreasonable requests.

(a) Examples of unreasonable requests:

- A parent calls up to demand that we report to him/her whenever the youth is in church.
- A parent insists that we bar the youth from coming to church without providing the relevant details such as the youth's name and age.
- A parent demands that we chase the youth away when he/she comes to church but insists that we cannot reveal that such an order comes from the parent.

An analogy would be this: If a parent disallows his/her youth to eat at McDonalds, he/she has the authority and responsibility to stop the youth from going to McDonalds. It is not reasonable for him/her to expect McDonalds to chase the youth out of their restaurants, or to bar the youth from buying food from their restaurants.

(b) Examples of reasonable requests

A parent writes in to the church officially by way of a letter or email, specifying the youth's personal particulars, the parents' particulars and the request to stop inviting the youth to church.

Once we are officially notified, we will stop inviting the youth to church. If this youth still comes to church of his/her own accord and is seen, we will do our best to advise him/her to obey the instructions given by his/her parents. If the youth still insists on coming repeatedly despite our advice, we will then require him/her to obtain written parental consent to indicate that he/she has the requisite permission to attend church services.

(D) Pro-Education Values

- 3.5 The Church believes that spirituality and academic excellence are synonymous. Something is amiss if a youth is active in church but is doing badly in school. We believe that education is for the training and development of the mind. As such, there are many programmes and initiatives in the Church to promote academic excellence amongst youths and to ensure a healthy balance between studies, church life and family life.

(E) Partnership with Principals and Teachers

- 3.6 The anchor event in our church calendar that actively promotes pro-education values is the Academic Excellence Weekend. During this annual Open House, parents, teachers and principals are invited to visit the Church so as to improve the understanding and collaboration amongst church leaders, parents and educators for the benefit of our youths. During the Academic Excellence services, the youths are taught topics such as the purpose of education and the importance of doing well in school. Stories of past successes are also shared to inspire and encourage youths to persevere and not give up in their studies.

- 3.7 Other key initiatives that promote Academic Excellence in the Church include:
- 3.7.1 Study Rule: Minimum study hours before youths are allowed to attend church services.
 - 3.7.2 Prerequisites: Minimum grades to be attained before youths are allowed to serve in leadership roles and in ministry.
 - 3.7.3 Tuition Ministry: Tuition assistance for leaders and ministry volunteers who have been identified to require additional academic support.
 - 3.7.4 Cash, Vouchers or Gifts: Encouragement to those who achieve a minimum result for major exams or make significant improvements.

(F) Financial Responsibility

- 3.8 Young people are taught that despite their age, they can be responsible with their finances and be generous in helping other people who are less fortunate than themselves. Young people are also taught how to budget and manage their finances through specially developed inhouse tools such as “The Budgeting Kit” for youths and children, as well as programmes such as the “Financial Excellence” course for our young working adults.
- 3.9 There are opportunities for young people from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to be selected to be recipients of the Scholarship and Opportunity Fund, where they receive monthly allowance or scholarships from the Church. This allows them not only to survive but also to thrive despite their challenging family circumstances.
- 3.10 While the Church teaches financial responsibility and provides financial aid to underprivileged young people, the giving of money to the Church to support the Church in its good works is strictly voluntary.
- 3.11 All youths (16 years old and below, in secondary schools) who wish to give more than S\$150 per month would be required to submit a consent form signed by their parent or guardian to indicate that they have their written approval.
- 3.12 This policy is shared and reiterated every year amongst the youths, especially during the Church’s building fund season. The Church’s leaders teach youths to be responsible by ensuring that they abide by this Policy.