

Children's Ministry Handbook

Introduction to Children's Ministry

Our Mission Statement

The Children's Ministry of Gospel of Grace Community Church exists to glorify God through evangelizing children, encouraging parents, and edifying servants so that the gospel may be spread among our children, families may be supported, and the church may be strengthened, through the teaching of God's Word.

2 Timothy 3:17 So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Our Purpose

God's glory is the ultimate purpose of all things (Rom 11:36) and is inseparably linked to redemption (Eph 1:12) through which regenerate man has the desire and ability (2 Cor 3:18) to please and praise God in everything (1 Cor 10:31). The church was established for God's glory and is a primary means through which He is exalted (Eph 3:21) as she shares, defends, teaches, and embodies His truth (1 Tim 3:15). This reality is manifested as the local church embraces its commission to evangelize the lost and its call to equip and encourage the saints, including parents. Therefore, Children's Ministry serves as an effective vehicle through which the church is strengthened as she glorifies God through sharing the gospel, supporting parents, and strengthening the saints.

Our Philosophy of Ministry

1. Evangelizing Children

• The Mandate

~ The church has a mandate to take the gospel into all the world and to share the good news of Christ with every person (Mt 28:18–20; Lk 24:46–47). Therefore the motivation for Children's Ministry must begin with God's command to evangelize the lost, which also includes children (Acts 2:39). Thus, Children's Ministry is a practical feature of our church's desire to obey Christ as we participate in this facet of the Great Commission.

• The Mindset

~ We understand that a child's greatest need is regeneration. Children can receive forgiveness of sins, a relationship with God, and purpose in life through trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior (Rom 10:9–13). This reality is the cornerstone of our ministry to children. Their greatest need for the gospel is our greatest opportunity for eternal impact (Rom 10:14–16).

• The Mission

~ Therefore, the target of our ministry is heart preparation as we cultivate the soil of children's hearts through sowing the seed of the gospel. This includes teaching children the fear of God, humility over weakness, penitence over sin, facts about the gospel, and an appreciation for Christ. Furthermore, since salvation is of the Lord, we avoid soliciting salvation professions but

encourage the fruit of genuine repentance as demonstrated through a life of submission to Christ's lordship.

2. Encouraging Parents

A. The Mandate

~ Parents have a mandate to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Thus, parents are to be the primary evangelists and spiritual trainers of their children. This is a continuous command that is actively fulfilled by the parent while being a godly example, giving personal exhortation, and specific edification for the spiritual well-being of the child.

B. The Mindset

~ The church is called to encourage parents in their God given task of raising godly children. This is clearly implied through the household commands (Col 3:18–21) and the church's mandate to equip, edify, and encourage believers (Eph 4:12–16). Furthermore, the Scriptures call for strong Christian families that are growing and being molded through the ministry of the Body of Christ (Eph 5–6). Therefore, our church seeks to support and enhance the spiritual vitality of the home, while never usurping the parental role and responsibility.

C. The Mission

~ Therefore, our mission is to support parents in their God given role of raising children to love Christ. We seek to accomplish this through edifying parents with classes, Bible studies, resources, and personal shepherding geared to elevate their effectiveness. We also provide encouragement through offering quality nursery so that parents can attend the Worship Service undistracted. Lastly, we seek to lovingly exhort those parents who may not have fully embraced their God given responsibility to raise their children in the Lord.

3. Edifying Servants

A. The Mandate

~ The church also has a mandate to edify and equip servants for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11–16). This happens as pastor-teachers provide spiritual leadership and resources encouraging people to grow in Christ-likeness. Thus, this practical preparation "for ministry" is inseparably linked to actually placing saints in the ministry. This further accentuates spiritual growth as saints exercise spiritual giftedness *through serving the Body, which ultimately strengthens the Body!*

B. The Mindset

~ Children's Ministry is an effective link in the chain of equipping and enlisting saints into productive ministry that promotes the spiritual growth and vitality of the church. This ministry serves as an appropriate place where believers can embrace their mandate to minister while also being ministered to through continual edification. Thus, Children's Ministry provides a plethora of

opportunities for saints to sacrificially serve and grow while simultaneously strengthening the church.

C. The Mission

~ Therefore, our mission is to also provide a place of constant edification for our faithful servants who minister every week. We desire that they would continue to be equipped even though they are already enlisted into the ministry of the church. In order to accomplish this we seek to provide opportunities for growth and encouragement through pastoral oversight, Bible studies, and enriching curriculum that takes them deeper into the Word. Also, we provide events designed for ministry-wide worship and fellowship that are always uplifting. These servants are also edified as they communicate God's truth to children and each other on a weekly basis.

Introduction to Sunday School

Our Ministry

- Occurs every Sunday before the Worship Service (2pm)
- Ministry to children ages four through eleven.
- Children are divided into separate classrooms based on age/curriculum.
- Children Ministry is not mandatory, rather is designed to aid families in teaching our children the Word of God.

Our Classroom

- Bible Lesson Clear, age appropriate, and follows our three year Sunday school curriculum, Generations of Grace
 - 15-20 minute lesson for 4-5 year olds.
 - 20-25 minute lesson for 6-8 year olds.
 - 30 minute lesson for 9-11 year olds.

NOTE: The length of individual lessons may vary; these are simply general guidelines.

- Music Exalts the person and work of God through Scripture saturated lyrics, age appropriate instrumentation, and engaging hand motions. We strive for a variety of music that reverently glorifies our God and the work Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:8)
- Craft(s) Creative activities that capture children's attention and reinforce the Bible lesson.
- Bathroom Break at teachers discretion as needed.

Our Leaders

Sunday School Teacher

- Oversees the administration, personnel, teaching, safety, and environment of a Sunday school class.
- See Ministry Responsibility Description, Appendix A.

Sunday School Assistant

- Assists the Sunday school teacher in the administration, safety, and environment of a Sunday school class.
- See Ministry Responsibility Description, Appendix B.

Our Qualifications

The following general qualifications apply to every adult serving in Children's Ministry:

- Member of Gospel of Grace Community Church.
- Completed Children's Ministry Application.
- Read Sunday School Handbook.
- Approved Background Check.
- Attend worship service regularly.
- A life that demonstrates the qualities of biblical character. (See Appendix C)
- Leadership approval

Our Expectations

Children will act like children

- Having the proper expectations diffuses frustrations, displeasure, and discontentment.
- Understand that children occasionally have bad days.
- Allow room for isolated incidents of disobedience while watching for patterns.
- Misbehavior and lack of self-control are <u>expected</u> in this environment, our concern is not for their behavior, but how we can make their time more enjoyable and edifying.
- When children err our response is grace.
- We are not to be heavy on discipline, rules, restrictions and correction.
- For class management we utilize structure, rewards and guidelines.

Our interactions with parents will be marked by grace, patience, and humility

- We serve parents best by showering them with encouragement, love and extraordinary care.
- Parents are ministered to when they see that you love their child.
- We can demonstrate humble service through joy:
 - In our labor
 - In our interaction at check-in/pick-up (greeting child by name)
 - In our attitude
- Know parents by name.
- Say yes with a willing heart to a parent's instructions and follow as best as you can.

- Do not parent children.
- <u>Do not</u> parent parents.
- Thank parents for the opportunity to spend time with their children (no matter their behavior).
- Praise children in front of their parents.

Safety & Security

Child Safety

- The Elders, staff, and volunteers of Gospel of Grace Community Church take safety seriously, and desire to have a safe and God-honoring environment where children can learn the truths of God.
- To that end we have the following policies regarding the operation of, and the workers in, Children's Ministry to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. These policies are for the protection of the children in our ministries, employees, volunteers, and our entire church family.
- In case of an emergency, every classroom is required to have a first-aid kit.

Members of the Church

All volunteers who work with children must be members of Gospel of Grace Community Church

Six Month Rule

• It is our normal practice that no volunteer will be allowed to work with children in any capacity until they have been an active and participating member of the church for a minimum of six months. The applicant must have been a regular attendee and involved in church activities for that period of time. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with the children.

Successful Background Check

- Anyone (volunteers, paid employees, private nurses, aids, and assistants) who has regular contact
 with children in any of our ministries must have a background check performed. Anyone who refuses
 to have a background check will not be permitted to continue in any Children's Ministry activity or
 class.
- In addition the initial background check, criminal background checks may be performed on workers on an ongoing basis, randomly or as deemed necessary.
- All information from the background check will be kept strictly confidential.

- Workers will be notified when they have been approved to serve at church-related functions. Only approved adult or teen workers are allowed in classrooms with minors. Approved workers should avoid being in the classrooms unless they are scheduled to be working in those classrooms.
- Substitutes and occasional volunteers must complete the background check process.
- Any prospective worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct of child abuse will not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with minors.
- Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the criminal background check, the following items will
 automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising
 of any activity or program involving minors:

Any conviction for:

- Criminal homicide
- Aggravated assault
- Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault (rape or statutory rape)
- Injury to a child
- Incest
- Indecency with a child
- Inducing sexual conduct of sexual performance of a child
- Possession or promotion of child pornography
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor
- Employment harmful to children
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure
- Enticing a child

Nametags

• All church employees and volunteer workers, who work with children, are required to wear a Children's Ministry nametag whenever they are supervising children.

Child Check-In

- Check-in and pick-up are two of the greatest opportunities to encourage parents. Please maximize these times to get to know parents!
- Children will check-in at the Children's Ministry Center before arriving at the room. The child will
 wear one of the identification tags in a visible location. Please place the other identification tag in the
 classroom roster.

- Please check the identification tag for any special instructions before parents leave. These tags all contain information vital to caring for the children.
- Please remind parents that if their child needs them during Children's Ministry that they will receive a text message on their cell phone.
- Saying good-bye can, at times, be difficult for children. It is normal for little ones to cry when a
 parent leaves. This does not usually last long, and separation becomes easier as parents develop
 regular attendance routines. If this should happen, try to create immediate interest in a toy or activity
 and assure the child that their parents will return after the worship service. If you are not able to
 console the child please contact the parents.

NOTE: It is imperative that parents not leave the church while their child is in our care. They need to be readily available in the event of an emergency.

Child Pick-up/Self Release

- Please check every parent's security tag before releasing a child. Even if you know the parent, please
 ask to see the security tag. If the parent does not have the security tag DO NOT release the child.
 Please contact the superintendent, Resource Room, or Welcome Center for assistance.
- Parents are free to give their security tag to another person (16 or older) to pick up their child.
- Please draw a line or an "x" through the child's identification tag in the classroom roster after releasing the child.
- Children are not permitted to release themselves from class unless they are eight years of age or older.

NOTE: Written authorization is required from parents for Self-Release.

- Parents should pick-up their children within 15 minutes of the close of the service.
- Please make sure that children have all their personal items before releasing for check-out. Lost and found items should be brought to the "Lost and Found" bin at the main office. Any item not claimed in 60 days will be donated to charity.

Open Door

• Church activities for children should be scheduled and conducted in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving blinds open and, wherever possible, by leaving the door to the room open. Under no circumstances will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen.

Discipline

• Behavior issues will be handled with gentleness and grace. Do not punish (physically, verbally, or emotionally) children for disobedience. Correction is only permitted to maintain classroom safety and

order. If a child is out of control or his actions are threatening the safety of other children, please inform the Children's Ministry Pastor. He will be able to help with the child or contact the parents (if needed).

 Please watch for repeated patterns of disobedience. Most behavior problems are sporadic and inconsistent and, therefore, are to be expected and can be overlooked. Repeated and regular disobedience, however, should be noted and communicated to the Children's Ministry Pastor. Please communicate all behavior issues with the Children's Ministry Pastor before talking with parents.

Personal Contact

- Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support or physical caretaking are appropriate in this community of caring Christians. Expressions of affection shall not be excessive, or be imposed upon others.
- Teachers and volunteers shall not interact with each other or children in any way that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Physical punishment or verbal abuse is never permitted and is grounds for immediate dismissal. If you must discipline your own children please do it in private.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

- If at any time anyone sees something at a church-related activity or program that creates a concern regarding child abuse, the following procedure should be followed:
- 1. Intervene as necessary to halt the suspected abuse.
- 2. Immediately notify one of the leaders of Children's Ministry.
- 3. Continue involvement and cooperation as requested by the Children's Ministry leadership in any additional reporting requirements.

<u>NOTE</u>: All allegations of reasonably suspected child abuse will be reported to the proper authorities in accordance with the mandatory reporting laws.

Food Allergies

- Do not give food to children with identified allergies (unless otherwise instructed by parents). These conditions will appear on the child's identification tags in the form of a red "A" (Allergies) or "EP" (Epi-pen).
- We ask parents to notify the Sunday School teacher or Children's Ministry Pastor if their child has allergies or uses an Epi-pen. These needs will appear each week on the child's identification tags when he/she is checked in at the Check-in Center.
- Our classrooms are peanut free zones

Epi-Pen Policy

• If your child is require to have an Epi-Pen see Appendix "D"

Sick Child

Steps to take if a child should suddenly become ill:

- Isolate the child
- Inform the Children's Ministry Pastor
- Children's Ministry Pastor will contact parents

Take the child out of the Class Room to wait for parents

Missing Child

Steps to take if a child is missing:

- Stay Calm!
- Confirm child was checked into the room in attendance roster
- Identify child's name and parent's cell phone numbers. Be prepared to give a description of child.
- Immediately inform the Children's Ministry Pastor
- Children's Ministry Pastor will contact parents and/or an Elder
- Provide any assistance that may be needed to locate child

Classroom Evacuation

- It is imperative that parents stay on the church campus while their child is in the Children's Ministry. Parents need to be readily available in the event of an emergency.
- When evacuating the classroom:
 - 1. Count all the children in the room
 - 2. Line up children in two lines (boys/girls)
 - 3. Grab the room binder which contains the attendance roster
 - 4. Move as a group to the nearest exit and to a secure location (parking lot)
 - 5. Count children again after having arrived at a secure location
 - 6. Go through the room roster to ensure all children are accounted for

Appendices

A – Sunday School Teacher Ministry Responsibility Description

Sunday school Teacher

Purpose

To oversee the administration, personnel, teaching, safety, and environment of a Sunday school class.

Goal

To provide a safe and enjoyable classroom environment for children to learn about the gospel, and to encourage parents through joyful service.

Responsibilities

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before class starts
- Remain in class until every child has been picked-up or self-dismissed
- Prepare and teach an age appropriate Bible lesson using the Generations of Grace curriculum and following the published GGCC schedule.
- Evangelize children and parents through the communication of God's Word, the demonstration of the love of Christ, and regular, intentional interaction.
- Oversee the implementation of a Generations of Grace related craft and age appropriate music each class time.
- Make an effort to interact with and encourage parents during drop-off/pick-up.
- Maintain the security of the children in accordance with established safety policies, checkin/check-out procedures, and GGCC Security procedures.
- Protect the safety of the children in case of emergency (e.g. fire, hurricane, tornado, shooter).
- Communicate all substitute needs and/or absences to Children's Ministry Pastor (2 weeks notice preferable).
- Report all behavior issues and significant incidents involving children, parents, and teachers to Children's Ministry Pastor.
- Know each child by name | Regularly pray for the salvation of the children

• Attend teacher training and other meetings.

Qualifications

- Member of Gospel of Grace Community Church | Deacon and Deaconess qualified
- Successful background check, CM Application, and Children's Ministry Pastor approval.

Children's Mission Statement

We exist to glorify God through evangelizing children, encouraging parents, and edifying servants so that the gospel may spread among our children, families may be supported, and the church may be strengthened.

B – Sunday School Assistant Ministry Responsibility Description

Purpose

To assist the Sunday school teacher in the administration, safety, and environment of a Sunday school class.

Goal

To provide a safe and enjoyable classroom environment for children to learn about the gospel and to encourage parents through joyful service.

Responsibilities

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before class starts
- Remain in class until every child has been picked-up or self-dismissed
- Communicate regularly with teacher(s) and parents.
- Evangelize children and parents through the communication of God's Word, the demonstration of the love of Christ, and regular, intentional interaction.
- Assist the teacher and children during craft time and music time.
- Make an effort to interact with and encourage parents during drop-off/pick-up.
- Maintain the security of the children in accordance with established safety policies, check-in/check-out procedures, and GGCC Security procedures.

- Protect the safety of the children in case of emergency (e.g. fire, hurricane, tornado, shooter).
- Communicate all substitute needs and/or absences to teacher and/or Children's Ministry Pastor (2 weeks notice preferable).
- Report all behavior issues and significant incidents involving children, parents, and teachers to Children's Ministry Pastor.
- Know each child by name | Regularly pray for the salvation of the children
- Attend teacher training and other meetings.

Qualifications

- Member of Gospel of Grace Community Church | Deacon and Deaconess qualified
- Successful background check, CM Application, and Children's Ministry Pastor approval.

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C – Character Qualities

- <u>Service</u> We are here to provide a service of care to parents and families. We will do this best by being sacrificial and accommodating to the parents. Romans 15:1–3
- Worship Our primary commitment is to the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. It is expected that every Children's Ministries servant-leader will participate in the corporate gathering of believers on Sunday morning. Hebrews 10:25
- <u>Humility</u> We are to view others as more important than ourselves and put their needs above our own. Christ is our supreme example. Being Lord of the universe, He lowered Himself to serve the needs of others. Philippians 2:3, 4
- <u>Teachability</u> God has graciously provided elders for the leadership of His church (Titus 1:5), and we are to lovingly submit to their rule. Hebrews 13:17
- <u>Joy</u> Our life should reflect the joy of the Lord because of all that He has done. Psalm 5:11
- <u>Graciousness</u> With all of the grace we've received in Christ, we ought to extend grace to the body of Christ and to others who have never yet experienced His loving-kindness. Colossians 4:6
- Enthusiasm We should be excited when we consider that God has chosen us, sinful man, to play a role in the extension of His kingdom. Matthew 28:18–20
- <u>Patience</u> We should reflect the same patience that Christ had and still has with us when dealing with parents and children. Ephesians 4:1, 2
- <u>Gentleness</u> We must be gentle as Christ was gentle. He did not lash out, nor did He respond harshly when not respected or obeyed. Proverbs 15:1
- Purity God greatly cares for the purity of His church. We should too. Ephesians 4:22–24
- <u>Unity</u> We must work together with our leaders and fellow workers, not complaining, but supporting and upholding one another. Putting on all the character qualities listed above will be a great expression of love for one another in our ministry. Colossians 3:12–14

D -- Epi-Pen Policy.

• Obtain a medical release form from parent to keep on file for every child using an Epi-pen.

Steps to follow should you need to check in a child with severe allergies/epi-pen:

- 1. Explain to parents our severe allergy/epi-pen policy located in Children's Ministry Handbook and classroom binder
- 2. Distribute the medical release form and waiver also located in the Children's Ministry Handbook and classroom binder to the parent (See below)
- 3. Explain these forms require a doctor's signature and need to be returned the following time the child is checked in
- 4. Receive the child into the room

EPI-PEN Parent Guide

(This is the severe allergy/epi-pen guide for parents located in the classroom binder) The following steps are designed to protect the health of your child. Please complete each of the following before dropping off your child in the Nursery or Sunday School:

- Turn in your child's Epi-Pen Medical Release Form to the Nursery or Sunday School room your child will be attending. This form will remain in your child's classroom and move with your child to his future room upon promotion.
- ***Please note this form requires a signature by your child's physician
 - Communicate information vital to caring for your child to Nursery room supervisor/Sunday School teacher and Nursery Leader (Nursery only).

Information to include:

- * Child's allergy(s) and any symptoms typical for your child.
- * Location of your child's Epi-Pen (travels with child to room).
- * Snacks your child may eat during snack time.

Please note the following:

- Nursery workers and Sunday School teachers will administer Epi-pens on a child who is suffering an allergic reaction.
- Your child's Epi-Pen must remain with him in class (in diaper bag or on his person).
- Be aware that we may need to contact you during class time. Please keep your cell phone or pager within reach.
- Please go directly to your child's room if you are contacted. If you cannot remember your child's classroom number or location, please call the Children's Ministry Pastor at 540-746-0101.
- Allergen exposure from adult volunteers or what other children have consumed outside of the classroom is outside of our control.

• Children's Ministry classrooms are **peanut free zones**.

Steps to follow should a child experience an allergic reaction:

- Identify
 - 1. Child's first and last name
 - 2. Parents' cell phone numbers
 - 3. If child carries an epi-pen for allergic reactions
- Retrieve the epi-pen
- Administer the epi-pen
 - 1. Open the epi-pen
 - 2. Stabilize the child's thigh
 - 3. Inject and hold
- Call
 - 1. Parent
 - 2. Children's Ministry Pastor
 - 3. 911 (if needed)

Appendix D GOSPEL of GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Private Phys	sician Authorization For Emergency	y Use of Epi-Pen
Child's Last Name	First Name	DOB
ALLERGY TO		
Dose Prescribed		
Printed Name of Physician	Signature	<u> </u>
P. (N. ()		
Parent Name(s)		
Parent Cell Number(s) Cell #1		Cell #2

Release and Waiver of All Claims To Administer an Epi-Pen and To Provide Additional Emergency Medical Services

To Provide Additional Emerg	gency Medical Services
I, the undersigned parent, parents, or legal guardian of "My Child"), do hereby voluntarily release and agree to hold its officers, directors, employees, volunteers, agents, and affili from any and all losses, damages, and claims of any kind that any other emergency medical services to My Child. Pursuant for GGCC agreeing to administer the Epi-Pen and other nece and willfully agreeing to waive all claims I or My Child may h	ates (hereinafter referred to collectively as "GGCC") may arise from GGCC administering the Epi-Pen or to this agreement, I understand that in consideration essary emergency medical services, I am knowingly
Parent Signature	Date
Authorization and Release Expires January	PMD review and renewal required.
Children's Ministries Epi-Pen PMD Authorization/Parent Release	Date:

Children's Ministry Sunday School Handbook Service Agreement

I will serve ultimately for the glory of God (1Cor 10:31)
I will serve in a manner that reflects the character of Christ (Phil 2:4-7)
I will serve with gratefulness understanding that ministry is a mercy from God (2Cor 4:1)
I will serve in such a way that children are properly evangelized (Mt 28:18-19)
I will serve with a weekly goal of personally encouraging parents (1Thess 5:11)
I will serve in a manner that edifies and supports my fellow servants (Gal 5:13-15)
I will serve with an attitude that sees the needs of others greater than my own (Phil 2:3-4)
I will serve with the safety and security of our children as a main priority (Ps 127:3-5)
I will serve with humility, integrity, and purity as my hallmarks (Gal 5:22-24)
I will serve with a submissive, loving, and teachable spirit (Eph 5:19-21)
I will serve as a steward knowing I will give an account to God for my life (2Cor 5:10)
I will serve so that I seek to fulfill my responsibilities set forth in this handbook (Heb 13:17)
Cut off this portion and turn it in to your Children's Ministry Pastor
I acknowledge that I received and read a copy of the Gospel of Grace Community Church
Children's Ministry Sunday School Handbook. I fully understand and agree to abide by all the
policies and procedures explained throughout the handbook while serving in this ministry. I
acknowledge that a failure on my part to follow the guidelines set forth in this handbook could result
in my removal from Children's Ministry.
Signature: Date:
Drintad Nama: