



# **Youth Ministry Handbook**

for

Gospel of Grace Community Church

A Virginia Non-Profit Corporation

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.”  
– Psalm 119:9

### **Our Mission Statement:**

The Youth Ministry of Gospel of Grace Community Church exists to glorify God through evangelizing our youth, encouraging parents, and edifying servants so that the gospel may be spread among our young people, families may be supported, and the church may be strengthened.

### **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).

We believe that in most churches, there is a disconnect between the ministry goals of adults and youth. Usually this is evident in that “adult ministries,” have vigorous Bible learning goal, while “youth ministry” is where the younger generation feeds itself “spiritual baby-food,” and entertains itself at any cost. We believe that it is therefore essential to have sound preaching of Scripture in the youth. This means that the gospel must remain central in youth ministry, and that they are expected to uphold the same standard as is expected in adult ministry.

It is important to not coerce the youth, or manipulate them to respond to God’s offer of salvation. Man-centered methods (such as altar calls, raising hands, coming forward, etc.), are not to be used. Youth can feel a great sense of peer pressure and consequently be given a false assurance of salvation. Instead the pure gospel is to be preached under the presumption of Acts 13:48; which assures us that all who are appointed to eternal life will believe. It is not the job of leaders to save the youth; instead the gospel is the means by which He saves, and we are to simply be continually faithful in sharing the good news.

### **Our Philosophy of Ministry**

#### **1. Evangelizing Children**

##### **A. 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 Youth Ministry must begin with God’s command to evangelize the lost, which also includes the children (Acts 2:39). Thus, Youth Ministry is a practical feature of our church’s desire to obey Christ as we participate in this facet of the Great Commission.

## **B. The Mindset**

~ We understand that the greatest need of our youth is regeneration because all are dead in sin and without hope of salvation (Rom 3:23). Yet, our youth, as well as our adults, 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 Youth Ministry, as their greatest need for the gospel is our greatest opportunity for eternal impact (Rom 10:14–16).

## **C. The Mission**

~ Therefore, the target of our ministry is heart preparation as we cultivate the soil of our youth's hearts through sowing the seed of the gospel. This includes teaching them 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 childcare so that parents can attend worship, Bible studies, or other ministry 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 provoking 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**

~ Youth 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, Youth 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.

## **Our Ministry**

- We will eventually conduct Youth Ministry services every Sunday morning.
- Ministry to children from 7<sup>th</sup> through the 12th grade.

## **Our Classroom**

- Classroom TBD.

## **Our Qualifications**

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

- o Member of Gospel of Grace Community Church
- o Completed Youth Ministry Application
- o Approved Background Check
- o Agreement with Gospel of Grace Community Church Doctrinal Statement
- o Attend weekly worship service in addition to serving
- o Commitment to fellowship through Bible study (not always a YM study)
- o A life that demonstrates the qualities of biblical character
- o Leadership approval

## **Expectations**

- Rather than descending to their level, we should seek to raise these teenagers to the level of Scripture.
- We do not seek to parent the parents or parent these young adults, but rather to come alongside the parent as a gracious and caring support as they raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
- Our primary goal is not simply to have activities, though fun has a legitimate place, but rather help those in Youth Ministry to love the Lord and know Him intimately, to love His Word, and to love the church.
- These are very important, foundational years for a young person, therefore, discipleship and mentoring will be a primary focus of the Youth Ministry.
- When behavior issues arise, physical punishment will not be tolerated on the part of the youth minister or volunteers. Rather (unless there is an immediate threat of harm to the misbehaving youth or others), the issue will not be addressed until after Youth Group is over and then will be addressed only in the presence of the parents, and with strict confidentiality.
- Any failure on the part of our youth will always be first met with a loving and gracious response to both the child and the parent.

- If there is no positive reaction to behavior issues on the part of the parent, the Youth Director will inform the incident to the Elder Board, which will then deal directly with the parents and the youth.
- All of our interactions with parents will be marked by grace, patience, and humility.
- We can demonstrate humble service through joy:
  - In our labor
  - In our attitude

## **Youth 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.

## **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 Youth 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.

➤ There are no exceptions for substitutes or occasional volunteers – all workers must complete the entire 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

## **Personal Contact**

- Please consider (men especially) giving children a “high five” instead of a hug. This is a great way to respond to the excitement of children in a way that will not be as easily misinterpreted.
- Employees and volunteers shall not interact with each other or children in any way that could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Corporal punishment or verbal abuse is never permitted and is grounds for immediate dismissal.
- Additional policies for men serving in Sunday school:
  - Men must be especially careful with their interactions and contact with children so that their conduct could not be construed in any way as inappropriate. Behavior that could be interpreted as inappropriate would be acts such as hugs, holding hands, hovering over a child, concentrating on one child for a prolonged period of time, and other like actions.
  - Men can positively defend against seemingly inappropriate behavior by proactively engaging children who affectionately approach them through high-fives, fist bumps, and handshakes. This will allow the servant to engage the child, before the child embraces them.

## **Reporting Suspected Abuse**

➤ Any time a worker 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.

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

## **Children’s Mission Statement**

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