

Dear Children's Ministry Worker,

The purpose of the Children's Ministry of Grace Community Church is to partner with parents in laying a foundation for the salvation and discipleship of spiritually healthy young people for ministry in the world. Sunday School is one of the main ways we accomplish this purpose at Grace. At each level of development, from infant to fifth grade, we want children to know that God is the most important person in the universe. Every week we have the opportunity to be a part of what God is doing in the lives of boys and girls who need to hear and see the reality of God's goodness toward them in Jesus Christ. As a volunteer you are entering into this glorious process. God has saved you, filled you, and gifted you for such a time as this.

Thank you for your willingness to minister to the body of Christ at Grace Community Church through your role in the lives of children and parents. We know that God is going to use this time to show children the greatness of His Son and make us more like Him (Rom 8:29).

In His Grace,
Jason Miller,
Pastor of Children and Families
Grace Community Church

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PURPOSE AND VISION

Our purpose as a children's ministry is **to partner with parents in laying a foundation for the salvation and building up of spiritually healthy young people for ministry in the world.** We believe that God has given parents the main responsibility for teaching their children to love God and His word (Deut. 6). We do not seek to take this responsibility away from parents, but rather to come alongside them and partner with them in the ministry that God has given them. We recognize that no person can cause another to believe the gospel and turn to Christ in faith, but as partners we seek to help parents lay a deep foundation of God's word in the lives of children so that in God's timing He can use that to bring them to Himself (2 Tim. 3:15).

Psalm 127 tells us that children are "like arrows in the hand of a warrior." The process of raising children is like the straightening, sharpening, aiming, and releasing of an arrow. Arrows are ineffective if left in the quiver. We want our children to grow in faith and maturity in Christ so that when they are released from our homes they make an impact in the world for God's kingdom.

Undertaking any task requires planning well for success. This means thinking about the end result before we begin. God's word teaches us that life is a vapor, and this means that the time we have with our children will quickly be gone. We want to have a long-term vision for who our children will be when they leave our care. What kind of people will they be? What will drive them forward? What will they treasure? Who will continue to preach and teach the gospel when we are gone? We want many things for our children, but these are the basics that we want to be true of every child when they leave our ministry.

LOVE GOD

Deuteronomy 6:5 & Matthew 22:34-40

This is the key to living in God's kingdom. When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment this is what He quoted from all of the Old Testament, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38). We fail our children if we only give them an intellectual knowledge of God without calling them to cherish and treasure Him with every fiber of their being.

LOVE GOD'S WORD

Psalm 1, Psalm 119, John 1:1-18 & 2 Timothy 3:15

God has chosen to reveal Himself to us through the Bible, and most clearly in His Son Jesus Christ who is "the Word made flesh." God's word teaches us who He is, and how to live faithfully as His children. A love for His word gives us the tools we need to fight temptation, to make us wise for

salvation, and to go and make other disciples. For this reason we teach our children from God's Word, sing it with them, and seek to help them memorize it and apply it to their own lives.

LOVE GOD'S PEOPLE

Exodus 20:12-17 & 1 John 4:7-21

The Bible is full of encouragement to love one another. Selfish pride is the root of many sins, but God's Spirit and His Word work in our hearts to help us love our brothers and sisters in Christ. John teaches us that the true test of our love for God is seen in how we love others. We want our children to build this kind of solid, long-lasting, God-glorifying relationships with their peers at church.

LOVE ALL PEOPLE

Leviticus 19:18 & Luke 10:25-37

The love of God does not set limits on who we are to love. The reality of our forgiveness in Christ and the gospel mission of the church compel us to love all people. This means that we show them the same kind of mercy that we have been shown in Christ. A child's world is very small. We want to help our children see how BIG God's kingdom is and that there are many people who need to see, hear, and feel His love for them in Christ.

DO NOT LOVE THEIR LIVES

Hebrews 11, Mark 8:34-36, & Philippians 3:8

Our children are constantly bombarded with the message that they should live for themselves, and fulfill every fleeting desire. God's call is radically different. He calls them to take up the cross and follow Him. Following Him means giving their lives for the gospel and finding Christ to be their all-satisfying treasure. We pray that this will be the desire of every member of Grace, and that our children will grow to see the "surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

WHY TEACH?

Deuteronomy 11:19 - Teach to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Deuteronomy 29:29 - The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Matthew 18:5 - Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.

Matthew 10:39 - Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 11:25, 26 - At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

Matthew 25:23 - Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.

Matthew 25: 35, 36 - I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Luke 2:46-47 – After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 6:40 – A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Colossians 3:23 - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

III John 4 - I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

2 Corinthians 9:8 - And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

TEACHERS AT GRACE

As a teacher at Grace Community Church I am:

- **A follower of Jesus Christ**, believing and trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse me from all sin and the indwelling Spirit of God to lead me in all truth.
- **Pursuing a relationship with the Father daily**, through prayer and study of the Word, submitting to the work of the Holy Spirit within me.
- **A member and an active participant within the church body**, worshipping, serving, and being served by the members of Grace Community Church.

As a teacher at Grace Community Church I covenant to:

- Study, pray, and prepare with diligence each week to lead the children in my class to best of my ability.
- Participate with my teaching team in whatever role has been assigned to me.
- Attend the trainings led by the Pastor of Children and Families and scheduled team meetings scheduled throughout the year. If unable to attend, I will pursue making up the training with my Team Leader
- Serve under the leadership of the Pastor of Children and Families, who serves under the leadership of the pastor and the elders.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes in advance of the children each Sunday, in order to pray with my team before the children arrive so that I can prepare my heart, and then prepare the room.
- Attend corporate worship each week.
- Use Planning Center Services to communicate planned absences, and contact the Ministries Assistant, my Team Leader, and the Pastor of Children and Families in the case of an emergency absence.

TEACHING TEAMS

Teaching teams are an effective way to minister to children and their parents. We view each age group (all sessions combined) as one team of teachers.

Personal benefits of being involved with a team:

- It allows you to serve in ways that can focus on your strengths and gifts.
- It allows you to experience the support of other adults.
- It allows you to experience the joy and camaraderie of being part of a like-minded team of people, striving for a common goal.
- It allows you flexibility in scheduling.
- It allows you to “stay fresh” and have a long children’s ministry tenure.

Benefits for the children:

- It allows the child to be cared for by an adequate number of adults.
- It allows the child to experience more individual attention and care.
- It allows the child to be involved in a small group with a specific teacher discussing God’s Word and praying for them on a weekly basis.
- It allows the child to have a safe and secure environment.
- Spiritual and behavior issues are better handled when relationships are strong and secure.

TEAM ROLES

- Team Leader:
 - Oversee the teaching teams for all sessions.
 - Be well-acquainted with the curriculum and the spiritual objectives of the Children’s Ministry and Sunday School for children.
 - Schedule team meetings for discussions, reviewing the goals for the class, and prayer.
 - Communicate with the Pastor of Children and Families concerning any needs of the class (additional personnel, supplies, curriculum materials, snacks, toys).
 - Communicate to the team any information distributed by the Pastor of Children and Families.
- Team Member:
 - Warmly greet each child by name.
 - Oversee distribution of take-home materials to each parents or child.
 - Teachers take turns teaching as assigned by the team leader.
 - Check out children at the end of class.

- Small Group Leaders (Elementary)
 - Lead the small group in a discussion of the lesson and lead the children in a significant prayer time.
 - Regularly pray for the small group during the week.
 - Know each child in the small group well and be on the alert to current needs and circumstances in their lives.
 - Be able to recognize the parents of each child in the small group and greet them by name.
 - Write a note of encouragement to a parent and/or child from the small group when appropriate.

CURRICULUM

Infants, Crawlers, and Toddlers

A Fragrance of the Knowledge of Christ - Children are prayed for by name as loving volunteers care for them.

1-Year-Olds

The Wonders He Has Done - Four brief stories are repeated throughout the year along with singing, prayer, and Scripture memory.

2-Year-Olds

His Praiseworthy Deeds - This curriculum presents great truths about God in very simple words, to show glimpses of who God is through the telling and repetition of 13 key Bible stories and basic truth statements over and over. Students begin learning “foundation verses.”

3-Year-Olds

He Established a Testimony: Old Testament Stories for Young Children - Key Old Testament stories are presented in chronological order. Major themes, such as God knows everything, God can do anything, God never changes, and faith pleases God, are highlighted. Students continue learning “foundation verses.”

4-Year-Olds

He Has Spoken By His Son: New Testament Stories for Young Children - Key New Testament stories are presented in chronological order. Major themes, such as God knows everything, God can do anything, God never changes, and faith pleases God, are highlighted. Students continue learning “foundation verses.”

Kindergarten

Jesus, What a Savior: A Study on Redemption - These lessons provide children with a beginning understanding of redemption, presenting the desperate condition of helpless sinners and the all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ to redeem us.

First and Second Grade

The ABC's of God: A Study on the Greatness and Worth of God - Study of the attributes of God in a manner structured to build a foundational theology.

Faithful to All His Promises: A Study for Children on the Promises of God - This curriculum emphasizes that God's character is trustworthy; therefore, His promises are true and reliable.

Third and Fourth Grade

To Be Like Jesus: A Study on Following Jesus - Study helps answer important questions about salvation and sanctification by explaining elements of the gospel message, its purpose, and promise.

In the Beginning...Jesus: A Chronological Study for Children of Redemptive History - Lessons show that the Bible is one complete true story progressively revealing God's redemptive purposes, coming to complete fulfillment in the Person and work of Jesus.

Fifth Grade

How Majestic Is Your Name: A Study on the Names and Character of God - Curriculum presents the character of God through His names, and our response to His character.

PROMOTION

Children, infants through four years of age, are registered in classes based on their date of birth (must be the age of the class no later than August 15 of that year). All elementary age children (K-5th grade) are assigned to class according to their grade in school. Parents can contact the Pastor of Children and Families to discuss any circumstances or concerns regarding their child's placement for the new Sunday School year.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

GENERAL POLICIES FOR ALL GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH EVENTS

No Child Alone Policy

For the protection of the children and volunteers, a minimum of two unrelated approved volunteers should be present at all times in the room where a child is. Children must not be left alone in a room with a single volunteer, or alone by themselves unattended. Parents may be alone with their own children in approved spaces such as the nursing mother's room, parent-child calm room, etc.

Who May Serve

To serve in the children's ministry at Grace Community Church, volunteers must be members of the church for at least six months, a paid staff member, a paid childcare worker, or a volunteer approved by the Elders. Youth aged 16 and up who are children of members may serve individually, but youth younger than 16 may only serve alongside a parent. All volunteers 18 and older must consent to and pass a background check, annually sign other agreements as instructed by the church, and complete any required training.

Background Checks

Every volunteer, staff member, paid childcare worker must pass a thorough background check in order to serve with our children. A background check will be required prior to working with children, renewed periodically, and may be re-administered at the discretion of Grace Community Church. Failure to pass a background check or refusal to permit a background check will result in not being allowed to work with children. These background checks help us ensure children will be cared for in a safe and secure environment.

Grace does not knowingly place or keep people in ministry leadership (elder, deacon, volunteer, worship team member, small group leader, ministry team leader) who have a pattern of sexual sin including unbiblical sexual activity, or habitual, uncontrolled mental lust or use of pornographic materials.

Grace does not allow people who have committed sexual crimes to serve in the children's or youth ministries, or those who have engaged in illegal sexual activity but who have not been arrested or convicted.

Grace will conduct ongoing training regarding child safety and protection. Every volunteer **MUST** participate in the required training in order to work with children.

Bathroom Safety

Potty training and preschool children should be provided with scheduled bathroom breaks. Some classrooms share a bathroom designed for a child. Female volunteers should accompany the child, offering verbal assistance as necessary with the door of the bathroom remaining open. If a child verbalizes the need for assistance, a volunteer must ask for a second female to oversee the assistance being given. Assistance may be given in pulling up clothing, wiping, flushing the toilet, and washing hands. The bathroom door should remain open during this time, and the child and first volunteer should always be visible to the second volunteer.

Elementary children should be required to go to the bathroom in pairs (or alone if using single use bathrooms.)

SUNDAY MORNING

Two Volunteer Rule

For the protection of the children and volunteers, a minimum of two volunteers should be present in the classroom at all times. If a situation leads to only one volunteer remaining, please ask a volunteer from a neighboring classroom to join you so that appropriate supervision can be given.

Situational Awareness

It is the teaching team's responsibility to oversee the location of all children within their classroom at all times during the sessions. Volunteers should notify a Sunday School Coordinator, law enforcement officer, Campus Monitor, or staff member if a child is missing. During the Sunday School session, volunteers should approach any child who is in the hall alone without supervision. Volunteers should also notify if they see a suspicious person remaining near designated classrooms for children.

Before & After Class

- At least two members of the teaching team must be present before children are allowed to enter the room.
- At least two members of the teaching team should remain with children until all have been picked up.

Check-In

- Parents/Guardians should check in their children using the iPads at the check-in stations.
- A member of the Check-in Team will be present to assist them.

- The Parents/Guardians should receive a name tag, a security tag, and a diaper bag tag (for younger children).
 - The security tag is given to the parent/guardian and is required for pick-up.
 - The nametag is placed on the child.
 - The diaper bag tag is placed on the child's bag.
- Visitors
 - Visitors should be directed to the children's welcome desk to check in their children with the check-in team. This team is located at the Children's Welcome Desk in the Discipleship Building as well as in the Gathering Hall next to the Welcome Center.

Check-Out

- Parents/Guardians should present their security tag or Planning Center mobile pass at the classroom door to check out their child.
- Volunteers will use the iPod in each room to scan the tag and check out the child.
 - Check-out instructions and scenarios are posted in each room.

Check-In/Out Backup Plan

If the internet is down and the Planning Center system is unavailable for check in and/or check out, volunteers should pull out the backup plan box from the labeled cabinet in their room and follow the instructions printed inside.

Contacting Parents

- Each week the Check-In system generates a numeric code that is printed on the child's tag and matches the parent's security tag. This tag also lists the names of the children and a number.
- If a parent/guardian is needed:
 - A team member should ask the Sunday School Coordinator to contact the parent via text message. If unsuccessful, the Coordinator may escalate by contacting the Pastor of Children and Families or another staff member.
- The team member should wait for the parent/guardian and accompany them to the classroom.

Volunteer Identification

All volunteers are required to wear a name tag identifying them as adults authorized to be in the classroom. ONLY Sunday School volunteers and adults who have been asked to substitute teach or help are allowed in the classroom. Friends and family members of volunteers are not allowed to remain in the classroom.

SUNDAY MORNING EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Radios/Walkie Talkies

A radio is available in each classroom to use to contact the coordinators and other leaders in situations where additional help is urgently needed due to a sickness or something else, situations where there are only two volunteers in the room but a supply is needed from down the hall, or other situations where a volunteer is not available to leave the room and walk to the nearest coordinator.

Rosters

Each week, each classroom will be provided a printed roster from Planning Center showing its list of that week's attendees. When the roster is delivered to a classroom, a volunteer should immediately cross out any children who are not there and add the names of any children present but not listed.

Campus Monitors and Law Enforcement Officers

Every Sunday there are volunteers and law enforcement officers who walk the grounds to help ensure the safety of our church members. If you see anything suspicious please report it to a Campus Monitor, law enforcement officer, the Children's Sunday School Coordinator, or a staff member.

Basic First Aid

A first aid kit is available in the Children's Supply Closet in the Nursery hallway, and in the Resource Room located behind the Children's Welcome Center. If it is a nonemergency, please inform the parent/guardian upon pick-up and indicate the type of first aid given.

Emergency Aid

In the event of an emergency, a volunteer should call 911 immediately on their cell phone. If a landline is needed, telephones are located at the Welcome Center and both Children's Welcome Centers. On Sunday mornings, while one volunteer stays with the child, another should locate the Children's Sunday School Coordinator. There are doctors available within our church every Sunday (The Coordinator and Pastor of Children and Families will help locate a parent and doctor). Law enforcement officers can also assist in summoning emergency assistance.

Emergency Evacuations

All volunteers should routinely review the evacuation map, which is posted in your classroom. Volunteers will be responsible for leading the children safely out of the building in case of an emergency.

Follow all instructions provided by law enforcement and staff members.

The printed roster should be taken outside and each child accounted for. If a parent/guardian arrives while you are preparing to exit, s/he must exit with the class. Children will be released to a parent/guardian when they are safely away from the building. Mark each child off on the printed roster as they are released to parents/guardians.

Lockdown

Should a situation arise outside or inside the building, a lockdown may be declared by a Sunday School Coordinator, staff member, campus monitor, or law enforcement officer. In the event of a lockdown, volunteers should immediately:

- Lock their classroom door (some classrooms have push-button locks and others have keys hanging above the door).
 - The half-door must be latched into place.
- Turn off the lights.
- Move the children out of the line of sight of the door, as best as possible.
- Close the blinds on any exterior windows.
- Lower the emergency window shade on the in-door window.
- Remain quiet and wait for further instructions.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Grace Community Church is committed to promptly reporting any and all known allegations of abuse or neglect of a child in keeping with state law.

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services provides the following information related to reporting child abuse:

What Is Child Abuse and Neglect?

- Physical abuse: Non-accidental trauma or physical injury of a child, or failure to protect a child from harm.
- Neglect: Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm, or risk of harm, to the child's health or safety.
- Sexual abuse: When a child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator or sexual behaviors/situations in which there is a sexual component.
- Psychological harm: A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered. May include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act.

Who Must Report Child Abuse?

Everyone in Tennessee is a mandated reporter under state law. Any person with reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected must, under the law, immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or to local law enforcement. The reporter can remain anonymous. To report, call 877-237-0004.

Failure to Report

Failure to report abuse is a violation of the law and a Class A misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of up to three months imprisonment, a fine or both. Those who report and "act in good faith" are immune from any civil or criminal charges which may result. The reporter has the right to remain confidential and anonymous.

Possible Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

- The child has repeated injuries that are not properly treated or adequately explained.
- The child begins acting in unusual ways ranging from disruptive and aggressive to passive and withdrawn.
- The child acts as a parent toward his or her brothers and sisters or even toward their own parents.
- The child may have disturbed sleep (nightmares, bed wetting, fear of sleeping alone, and needing nightlight).

- The child loses his/her appetite, overeats or may report being hungry.
- There is a sudden drop in school grades or participation in activities.
- The child may act in ways that are developmentally inappropriate, such as sexual behavior that is not normal for his/her age group.
- The child may report abusive or neglectful acts.
- Note: The above signs can indicate something is wrong but do not necessarily indicate abuse or neglect.

Additional information can be found at the following site: <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting/faqs.html>

If a team member suspects or hears about the alleged abuse or neglect of a child, the following procedures should be followed:

- If there exists an emergency or life threatening situation, call 9-1-1.
- To report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children’s Services, call 877-237-0004 to speak with a trained case manager regarding the situation.
 - If a teacher desires the presence of a Grace staff member during this process, contact a staff member immediately so as to not delay the reporting process, keeping in mind that the law requires the matter to be reported “immediately.”
- Contact the Pastor of Children and Families as soon as possible, or the Director of Staff and Ministries or the Senior Pastor if the allegation involves the Pastor of Children and Families.

If a team member suspects or hears about any behavior by another team member or anyone at Grace that conflicts with the policies of Grace Community Church, is abusive, is a misuse of authority, is destructive, or is disruptive, contact a staff member immediately for assistance and to report the matter. Any violation of the policies in this book or other policies of Grace will be treated as a serious matter and reported to the proper authorities.

If the behavior involves a staff member and/or if the team member does not feel comfortable reporting the behavior to a staff member, they should immediately contact one of the Elders.

Grace’s Commitments in the Event of an Incident

- Grace will not negate the role of the secular authority/government. We won’t protect offenders.
- We won’t discipline those who report abuse or are abused.
- We won’t try to reconcile victims and abusers.
- We will protect the victim and his or her families.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

General Cleaning

When cleaning up after a child (vomit, blood, bathroom accidents, etc.) use the gloves that are provided and dispose of the waste in the proper receptacle. Assume the child has HIV/AIDS, (this is a precaution for everyone) secure the trash bag and inform the Pastor of Children and Families.

Allergies

If a child has an allergy, it will be listed at the bottom of their name tag. A list of children with known allergies will be posted in each classroom. Foods containing nut products and/or their derivatives (oil, butter) are not served to children at our church.

Illness

The following symptoms present in a child would require you to locate the parent and ask them to remove his/her child from the classroom. Please inform the Sunday School Coordinator or Pastor of Children and Families.

- Fever within the past 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Pink eye or other eye infections
- Persistent cough
- Sore throat
- Unexplained rash
- Chicken pox, measles, shingles
- Lice
- General irritability that is unusual for the child

If a child becomes sick while in the classroom, take the child to the front desk and ask for assistance to locate the parents.

Diapering

Men are not permitted to change diapers. Women should prepare to change a diaper by first washing hands and applying gloves. Do not leave the child unattended at the changing table. Paper towels are placed on top of the changing pad and changed after each use. Diaper Genies are available to dispose of each changed diaper. Hands should be washed and re-gloved between changes.

Sanitation/Cleanliness

Teachers MUST wash hands:

- Upon arrival

- After EACH diaper change or potty assistance
- After wiping a child's nose
- After personal toileting
- After cleaning
- Before handling food
- After touching play-dough

Children MUST wash hands

- Upon arrival
- After toileting
- After wiping their nose
- After playing with play-dough

Other important reminders

- Tables should be wiped down with antibacterial cleaner before snack time.
- Blue mats and foam climbing blocks should be wiped down before and after children arrive in the infant, crawler, ones, and toddler rooms.
- Please use Lysol spray on larger toys if time prevents wiping down thoroughly.
- Personal items should be clearly labeled with the child's name using tape provided in each room (if not otherwise labeled).
 - Diaper bags
 - Juice cups
 - Pacifiers, etc.
- Toys should be wiped with cleaning wipes and/or sprayed at the end of each session on Sundays and after each time the room is used on other days.

