



valleychildren

# Children's Ministry Team Handbook

2011 - 2012



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# Welcome!

Welcome to the Children's Ministry Team! Whether you are a first time team member or have served for years, we are glad you have a heart to serve the Lord and use your talents and spiritual gifts to help children grow spiritually. Whether you work in the resource room, check books in the library, lead a team or teach children, your part of the team is just as valuable as anyone else's. We cannot accomplish what God has for us without each other!

One of the most important things for a team to be effective is to have unity of vision and good communication. To help our team gain that, this handbook has been written. Please read on to find out more about our team and feel free to ask questions if something is not clear or a topic hasn't been covered which interests you.

## Be Aware of the Team's Mission and Values

***Mission: To help children come to know and follow Jesus.***

***Values:***

1. We value prayer as the foundation of our planning and preparation, connecting us with the will of God.
2. We value workers who demonstrate a personal relationship with Christ by acting like Him, who love sincerely, who willingly share their life stories, who desire to use God-given gifts, who come prepared, and who are committed as partners with parents to disciple the children.
3. We value scripture-based creative learning that challenges the children to think and grow in their understanding of God's view of the world, how to listen to God, and how to live as a disciple of Jesus, including being able to share the **good news** with one another.

4. We value an environment that is safe, accepting, caring, and supportive for the children and the team of workers.

### **Check yourself:**

1. Are you passionate about helping children come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and helping them learn how to be a disciple?
2. Do you share the same values as the team?

## **Be Aware of Yourself**

The most important tool in the hand of God for spiritually influencing a child is not the curriculum, not the building, not the snacks, but **you!** Although the parents win the honor of having the highest influence in their child's life, you can have a great impact on a child by the way you let the love of Christ shine through you! Check yourself according to the standards below to see where you are strongest and where you might need to grow.

1. Am I able to share with children my personal testimony of how I came to know Christ and how He helps me everyday?
2. Am I demonstrating to children obedience to God's Word by being in fellowship with other Christians, in regular attendance in worship services and other ways?
3. Am I displaying a Christ-like character in the following ways:
  - my speech (encouraging and not harming)
  - my commitments (keeping my word)
  - my dress (maintaining modesty)
  - my team relationships (keeping pure and forgiving)
  - my actions toward authority (being respectful and following church procedures)
  - my spirit (humble and teachable)
4. Am I doing what I'm expecting the children to do; praying, reading and studying God's Word faithfully?
5. Am I showing compassion to and interest in each child by getting to know him or her and their parents, not just by name but as individuals?
6. Do I pray for the children weekly? Do I pray for the ministry at large and other teachers?
7. Do I show concern for children when they are missing for a week or two through a phone call or note?
8. Am I confident that God can use me and am I faithful to do my best job? This includes arriving at least fifteen minutes before the start of class and being prepared for the lesson and activities.
9. Am I aware of how to get supplies and AV equipment? (see below)
10. Am I teaching the children about offerings and encouraging them to bring in an offering each week?

# **Be Aware of the Environment**

We are referring to the environment set either in the church or when on a group outing. There are three components: the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical. To be the most effective children's team member, you need to be aware of all three!

## ***Spiritual Environment***

Setting the tone for your classroom or work area spiritually involves praying when you arrive and asking God's presence to fill the place, asking for hearts to be receptive and asking for God's guidance as you carry out your role for the day.

It also involves being aware of any open doors that the enemy may try to walk through. The Bible says we have an enemy who is like a roaring lion, roaming around and seeking whom he may devour. He thinks he has permission to enter areas where there is strife, lying, judgments and other negative attitudes. The Bible tells us not to give the devil a foothold.

If you have any unresolved conflict between you and a coworker, be adamant about resolving it and asking God to help you to forgive. Unforgiveness in our hearts is a breeding ground for the enemy to form a stronghold and to bring confusion into our ministry. Dealing with conflict is explained more fully in the section on team dynamics.

If you see these attitudes in the children, instruct them on how to forgive one another and lead them in a time of prayer. If you hear any fighting among the children or unkind words, stop it immediately! Use this opportunity to instruct and better understand the needs of the children involved.

If you feel there is a strong spiritual battle going on against you or your class or group, please ask other team members, your team leader and/or any of the Children's Ministry Staff to pray with you. Exposing things to the light helps diffuse its power!

Keep the Word of God at the central part of each class. Be sure to follow the provided curriculum. Use the time each week to go over the memory verse for the month or week. In some cases, there are CD's with songs that accompany the verse available for your class. The take home papers have the memory verse listed on them. Distribute these to each child and encourage them to work on memorizing the verse at home in addition to the practice they get in class.

## ***Emotional Environment***

Keeping an environment emotionally healthy is closely related to spiritual health, since the more Christ-like an environment, the safer children will feel emotionally.

Be sure to demonstrate to all children that they are accepted and loved. Watch for other children who might want to leave a child out, and encourage those children to be kind to everyone.

Any negative comments toward another child must be dealt with and not ignored! Use that opportunity to ask the child if he/she thinks Jesus would want him/her to say that. See if he/she will apologize to the child to whom they made a comment, and if that child is ready to forgive. Note this incident in your mind, and later try to understand the dynamics working to prompt the child's negative comment. Then try to deal with the underlying issue.

Demonstrate kindness and gentleness in your speech. The Bible says a harsh word stirs up wrath. Sometimes people think they must talk in a harsh way to demonstrate authority. This is quite the opposite! When one walks in true authority, it is evident by having control over their tongue. Speak firmly when needed, but never harshly!

Help new and shy children to feel secure by giving them eye contact and getting to know them a bit. Often children are uncomfortable coming to a room and being left by their parents with people they don't know or recognize. Reach out to them in their discomfort and try to invite them in and inform them of some of the great things that are in store for the day.

Get to know your children and what makes them tick. Call them and their parents to get to know them. Take time in class during discussions to find out the child's interests. Encourage parents to visit your class and to partner with you in other ways.

### Children's Ministry Discipline Procedures

Follow the Children's Ministry Discipline Procedures. We expect each classroom teacher to set up and maintain classroom expectations so that children can clearly understand the behavior that is expected of them. We do have expectations and we do expect children to follow them. We have four very basic expectations for all children which are:

1. Respect each other
2. Obey your Teacher/Leader
3. Use your inside voice
4. Walk, don't run

Each teacher and/or teaching team should set up expectations at the beginning of the teaching term and communicate these with the children for their particular class. The expectations should be communicated with the children **each time** the ministry meets. For school-age children, the expectations should be displayed in writing in the room.

Catch children behaving well! Positive reinforcement always works to encourage children who are not only behaving, but those who need the attention and have a hard time behaving. Look for those moments constantly during the class to say, "I notice you are listening with your eyes on me, Jen. Thank you. Or, that is a great inside voice, Ben. Good job remembering!"

If there is a particular discipline challenge, a teacher can follow these guidelines:

1. Pray and ask God for wisdom.
2. Remind the child of the rule and if necessary, redirect his/her actions.
3. If the child continues the action after another correction, tell the child he/she will have to take a time out to think about the action. Sit the child down in a different part of the room and ask him/her to ask God to help him/her have self control.

4. If the child is continually not cooperating after correction, have the other teacher or helper walk the child to the Children's Welcome Desk to sit with the desk attendant or ministry staff.
5. Partner with the parent(s). Tell the parent what happened during class that day. The teacher could say, "I really enjoy your daughter in class. I have noticed I am having a challenge in (this particular area) and I would like to partner with you so that your child has the best possible experience in class. This is the behavior I am observing (describe). Do you have ideas for me that you think would work? Will you pray with me on this? Thanks for your help!"

Note for teachers: depending on the situation and the timing of the ministry, this conversation might also work in a phone call.

- If a particular child continues to be challenging, consult your team leader. If further resources are needed, the team leader will be in contact with the Director or Associate Director of Children's Ministry.
- Teachers, please avoid talking about a particular child with whom you are having a challenge. Rather, be proactive. If you feel unsure in handling the situation, talk with your team leader in private (not in the hallway where a conversation could be misinterpreted).

## ***Physical Environment***

The physical environment includes knowing who is in the room at all times, knowing the condition of the room (safe and clean), knowing you are not serving any food to which a child could have a deadly allergic reaction, knowing how to get out of the room in the case of an emergency, and knowing how to monitor activities in the lesson to keep everyone safe, including leaving the room to go to the playground. Let's start with focusing on who is in the room.

## Classroom Teachers

We have a ***two person in the classroom*** expectation. In most cases, our classes are staffed with at least two teachers. In the event that they are not, the following procedures should be followed:

1. If you are the only adult in a classroom with a group of children, please leave curtains, blinds and classroom door open.
2. If you are the only adult in the classroom and there is only one child attending, please join in with a neighboring class.
3. Teachers must wear lanyard name tags to identify that they are the assigned teacher. In the event that you have misplaced your lanyard go to the Children's Ministry Welcome Desk to replace it.

We also want to know that the children have ***safe*** adults who have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Therefore, each children's team member who works directly with children must go through our ***Kids' Safe Process***. If you haven't already done this, follow the steps below:

1. Complete Children's Ministry Application.

2. Read through policies and procedures and our Statement of Faith.
3. Give completed application to Director of Children's Ministry.
4. Call the Children's Ministry office to make an appointment to discuss your testimony and interests/gifts for serving in the ministry. The next step to get connected with the ministry will be provided at that time.

### Attendance and Check In/Check Out Procedure

Maintaining accurate attendance records allows us to plan for growth, as well as follow up with children. Checking in and out with the attendance sheet and security cards helps us to know where the children are at all times. Children who are registered in one class at a certain hour should not be in another class during that same hour. If you know that they are not a visitor, please encourage the parents to take them to the correct room. Parents should not move their child up to another room during the year. Move-up Sunday is always in September except for the switch between the nursery and walker rooms and walker room to the two-year-old classroom. Team leaders and teachers will make that decision together with the nursery coordinator.

Attendance is recorded each week by following the procedure below:

#### 1. Checking In:

- A. An attendance list is located on the check-in table of each classroom. Allergies and special needs are written next to the children's names.
- B. Be sure all parents sign in their child by placing a "✓" by their name. If the child is in a class that has pagers, give the parents a pager and record the number of the pager you have distributed on the attendance sheet.
- C. If a child's name is not preprinted on the attendance list:
  - The teacher asks the parent if they are visiting for the first time. If they are from out of town or visiting from another church and do not plan to attend regularly, they should be sent to the Children's Welcome Desk to get a visitor security card.
  - If they plan to attend regularly and are not registered, have them complete a registration form and then send them to the Children's Welcome Desk for a temporary security card.
  - The parent writes the child's name on the attendance list.
  - Please note: a child's name will not appear on the preprinted list until the registration form has been processed.
  - Tell the parent that once they have completed the registration form, a security card will be made for them and that they can pick it up the following week at the Children's Ministry Welcome Desk.

#### 2. Checking Out:

- A. One teacher should stand out in the hall or just in the doorway with the clipboard and attendance sheet.

- B. Ask the parent for the Security ID Card, and check to see if the number and name on the card matches the attendance sheet. If they have a pager, collect that and check to see if the number of the pager corresponds with the pager number assigned to them.
- C. Obtain the parent's signature.
- D. Call for the child to be dismissed to parent.

### Offering

We collect an offering each Sunday in the classrooms. Allowing the children to give their offering is one way that we encourage children to learn the practice of financial stewardship and giving.

1. An envelope is provided to collect the offering that children give. The envelope is located in the blue attendance tote in each classroom.
2. The offering is collected by the team leader at the same time that attendance is counted.

### Bathroom Use

When a child is uncomfortable because they have to go the bathroom, it can disrupt their learning. They want to feel it is okay and safe to go the bathroom. Children in the third grade and up should be able to go to the bathroom whenever they ask. If a child repeatedly asks during one class, pull them aside to see if there is a problem or if they are just trying to roam the halls. Be sure you remember who you dismissed to the bathroom to ensure they come back in a proper amount of time. Children under third grade should be accompanied to the bathroom by a teacher or teacher's aid and should be given the age level appropriate privacy as described below.

#### Procedure for Preschool Children

1. Our preschool classrooms are equipped with bathrooms that adjoin the classrooms.
2. 2 and 3 year olds may need more assistance, so always leave the door open if you need to go into the bathroom with a child.
3. The child should always try to toilet himself/herself—this includes wiping and pulling up underwear.
4. If a 4 and 5 year old asks for help, the teacher may help with outer clothing.
5. In the case of an accident where the child does not get to the bathroom in time, contact parents for assistance. (Most rooms are equipped with extra clothes in the closet.)

#### Procedure for Children Kindergarten through Second Grade

1. The bathrooms for school aged children are in the hallways near the classrooms.
2. It is the role and responsibility of the desk attendants to monitor the hallways in order to assist teachers with bathroom trips. If you need to call for them, you may find their cell phone number in the informational notebook in your classroom tote.
3. Prop the outer door of the bathroom open.
4. Wait by the bathroom door.
5. The child enters the cubicle alone.
6. If the outer door of the bathroom remains propped open, the teacher may enter the sink area of the bathroom if needed.

## Playground

Children are energetic and enjoy time to run and play. The playground is a great environment to connect with the children and build relationships with them. The playground is available for use with adult supervision. Time on the playground is not a replacement for class time. Use extra precaution when on the playground and follow the guidelines below:

1. Please leave a note on the doorway of your classroom indicating that your class will be on the playground.
2. During regularly scheduled class times, limit time on playground to ten minutes

## Snacks

For all preschool classes, the church will provide a snack each week. The snack should be stored in the classroom closet as well as the cups for water. For the older grades, snacks are optional and each teacher has to provide them for his/her class. If you do bring in an additional snack, remember we are a **nut-free environment**. Allergies to peanuts and a variety of nut products can often be fatal to children with peanut allergies. We maintain a nut-free environment in Children's Ministry which means that no peanuts of any kind will be used in snacks or project materials.

## Emergency and Incident Report Forms

In the case of a medical emergency, call the desk attendant on their cell phone or have someone come to the Children's Welcome Desk to get help. After an accident happens, such as a child is bitten by another child, a scraped knee, or some other injury, please follow the steps below:

1. Obtain an Incident Report Form at the Children's Welcome Desk
2. Complete the Incident Report Form as best as you can
3. Return Incident Report Form to the Director of Children's Ministry

## Evacuation Procedure

For emergencies where evacuation of the building is necessary, emergency exit routes are posted in the classrooms. Teachers have the responsibility of being familiar with the emergency exit routes. A practice evacuation will occur at least once a year. Follow the guidelines below during an evacuation.

1. Calmly gather all children:
  - In the nursery, use the evacuation cribs and have the staff hold all remaining children in their arms.
  - For preschool classes, use the ropes to help the children stay together.
  - For elementary age children, have them line up.
2. Designated teacher/leader should take attendance list and count all children as they exit room.
3. Designated teacher/leader should check room, if safe to do so, to make sure all children are accounted for, take attendance list and shut door of room upon exiting.
4. Follow posted fire evacuation plan to nearest exit. Keep in mind that if that exit is blocked you may need to seek an alternate route. Please go to designated spot on fire evacuation route plan.
5. Once outside and away from building teacher/leader should take attendance once again to ensure all children are accounted for.
6. Please keep children with you and ask parents to wait to sign them out until the "all clear" has been given and it safe to re-enter the building.
7. Should it not be possible to re-enter the building parents will be asked to sign their children out before taking them.

## Appearance of the Room

A clean and child-friendly décor, with children's artwork displayed in the rooms, communicates to children and parents that we highly value them. Try to make your room a great place to be just by looking around.

1. Bulletin boards and tack strips are mounted in the classrooms for this purpose.
2. If you need additional space (bulletin boards, cork boards or tack strips), please contact your team leader or Children's Ministry administrative assistant.
3. Please ask about how to hang things on the walls in your room in order to avoid damaging them.
4. For displays outside the classrooms, there are bulletin boards outside each classroom doorway. Please contact the Associate Director of Children's Ministry, 673.6826 x126 if you have any questions about the bulletin boards.
5. Please do not tape displays/pictures/signs to the doors.

If you feel you need additional space after these resources have been used, please contact your team leader to discuss your needs.

## Clean Up Procedure

We consider it a blessing to have a great facility available for ministry with children and families. We also desire to teach children to be good stewards of this resource. We expect that a clean-up routine will be incorporated each time that the classroom is used.

We also have many groups sharing the classrooms during the week. We have set up the closets so that most classes have a bin labeled for storing supplies/books. Please use these bins to make the rooms and closets organized and user-friendly.

Be sure to develop a clean-up routine with your class. At the end of each class time, make sure that:

- a. The tables are cleaned off.
- b. Toys are put away.
- c. Supplies are returned to the closet or resource room.
- d. No food or drinks are left on the floor or tables. Sweepers are located in the resource room, upstairs kitchen and Room 101, if needed.
- e. If you are the last class in the room, please make sure chairs are stacked against the wall, windows are closed and lights are turned off.

If you are using paint, Play Dough and other messy (but fun to use) items, please use common sense along with the following procedures:

1. If you are painting or using other potentially messy items, please cover tables and use plastic tarps for the carpet below the table.
2. Plan ahead. If you plan to use one of these potentially messy items, plan ahead to make sure you have smocks for the children and materials for covering the tables and carpet before your ministry begins.
3. If the carpet has visible evidences of the messy items—such as popcorn or saw-dust from a project—use a vacuum so these items do not get ground into the carpet.
4. If you notice that a project with markers left many unintended marks on the tables, please take a moment and use the cleaner in the closet near the sink in your room and help us keep the tables in great shape for the long term!

## **Be Aware of Team Dynamics**

You are part of the Children's Ministry Team which includes all people who serve in any of the Children's Ministries and is lead by the Children's Ministry paid staff. You are also part of a smaller team which is lead by a team leader. In some cases we still don't have team leaders. In that case, one of the Children's Ministry staff will act as the team leader.

The role of your team leader is to lead your team. He/she has been given authority and training by the Children's Ministry staff. Therefore, please respect this authority granted to them. He/she are there to encourage you and your team, to communicate with one another, to grow to be more mature Christians and more skillful ministry servants, and to be there for you as a supporter and listener. Please allow your team leader access to your life! Give him/her the chance to get to know you so that you can have a better working relationship and he/she can be there for you. Please make your best effort to attend all meetings and fellowship opportunities that your team leader coordinates. If you have any questions about your ministry, he/she should be able to answer them. If not, he/she know where to go to find the answer. Have fun with your team leader and be thankful for them!

To be a healthy team, one of the most important aspects is for each member to understand their role on the team so that he/she can communicate in a healthy way with one another. Let's start with the obvious things we need to communicate to one another.

### Important Calendar Dates

Meetings, days when no clubs or classes are occurring, and Children's Ministry Team trainings will be communicated to you in a variety of ways.

- Email is the easiest and most cost effective way. If you are willing to check your email regularly, that will help with communication.
- There are also printed calendars located in the hanging pockets near the Children's Ministry office.
- Team leaders will call to alert you of things.
- Postcards will be sent for certain events.

Just as we make our best effort to reach you, please be sure to call or email back when a response is needed!

### ***Teacher Replacement Procedure***

Please start by notifying your team leader! He/she will look for a substitute for you. Please be sure to tell them the lesson you are on for that week and where the teacher's book and any other supplies are located. If you are sick at the last minute and cannot reach the team leader at home before your class, call the Children's Ministry Welcome Desk at 673.4760. As a last resort please call Lois Hales for Elementary, Patsy Webb for Preschool and Mary Swank, the Nursery Coordinator, for the Nursery. Contact information is listed on page 16.

### ***Resolving Conflict***

If you are hurt or frustrated by a situation, it is your biblical responsibility as a Christian to seek out that person and talk with him/her (refer to Matthew 18). Do not allow hurt and conflict to build. You can be part of a solution, healing or breakthrough that helps the church as a body move forward in unity and be a light in the community! If the person will not cooperate to resolve the conflict, please ask the team leader to go with you to the person a second time. If you are having conflict with your team leader, and they will not listen, then have one of the Children's Ministry staff go with you to help mediate.

## **Be Aware of Additional Procedures**

### ***Resource Room***

We have a great resource room with many supplies that allow creative teaching. Patsy Webb, Associate Director of Children's Ministry, oversees a team of people who serve in this ministry through maintaining the classrooms with weekly inventory of supplies as well as maintaining and

cataloging resources in the Teacher Resource Room. Visit the resource room and check out the wonderful supplies available.

If you have to purchase something for your lesson, check with your team leader for approval, and be sure to turn in a Request For Payment (RFP) form to your team leader or directly to the Children's Ministry Department. If purchasing additional supplies is approved, we will reimburse you.

Reimbursement is for Valley ministry related expenses only. To receive reimbursements follow the steps below.

### ***Steps for Reimbursement***

1. Save your original receipt. We cannot reimburse you without proof of your purchase. Please note: we cannot reimburse you for tax that you pay on supplies. Get a copy of the church's tax exempt form to use when purchasing taxable items.
2. Receipts should be submitted no later than a month after a purchase has been made. We cannot guarantee payment after 30 days from purchase.
3. Obtain a ***Request For Payment*** form at the Children's Ministry Welcome Desk.
  - i. Staple your receipt(s) to the RFP.
  - ii. Write your name and address on the RFP in ink.
  - iii. On the form, write in the ministry area (i.e. Boys Brigade or Sunday school, etc.) for which you've purchased resources under purpose along with other detailed info. Enter amount to be reimbursed.
  - iv. Leave your completed form in one of two places:
    - a. In the box marked ***Administrative Assistant*** outside of the Children's Ministry Administrative Assistant's office next to the resource room.
    - b. In the mail room in the Children's Ministry Administrative Assistant's box.
  - v. Requests for payment are processed on Tuesdays. Checks are mailed on Thursdays.

### ***Audio Visual Equipment***

Audio Visual (A/V) equipment is available for classroom use upon reservation. This includes: projectors, screens, and TV/VCR carts. Reserve the A/V equipment that you need through the Children's Ministry office (673.6826 x117) ***3 days prior*** to when you would like to use it.

Videos and DVD's can be a valuable tool to reinforce Bible lessons with children. In order to be proactive and appropriate regarding video and DVD use, please check with your team leader beforehand. Valley Children's Library videos/DVD's are labeled for either ***preschool*** or ***elementary*** use. If you are using a Valley Children's Library video/DVD, please do not use ***elementary*** labeled videos with children in kindergarten and under.

### ***Procedure to Conduct Class Off-Site***

Please follow the steps below to communicate regarding this:

1. Contact Director of Children's Ministry to obtain approval for any off-site ministries, at least three weeks prior to event.
2. Distribute Release of Liability forms (complete with information about your specific event) to children (forms are available at the Children's Welcome Desk).

3. Distribute Motor Vehicle Transportation forms to adults who will be driving and turn them into the Children's Ministry office prior to the event.
4. Teachers or chaperones for events are responsible to keep the Release of Liability forms for each child with them during the off-site event.

***A child without a signed Release of Liability form will not be permitted to go to event.***

### **Now that you've read this book, check yourself:**

- Are you passionate about helping children come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and helping them learn how to be a disciple?
- Do you share the same values as the team?
- Are you aware of the spiritual, emotional and physical environments of your classroom?
- Do I know my responsibilities as a team player?
- Do I have the important dates written on my calendar?
- Am I ready to see the lives of children grow?
- Am I praying for the children, the team, and the church?
- Am I ready to partner with parents?

***Get ready! God is going to do great things among us this year.***

***Let's be looking for His work and rejoice together over it.***

***Have fun!***