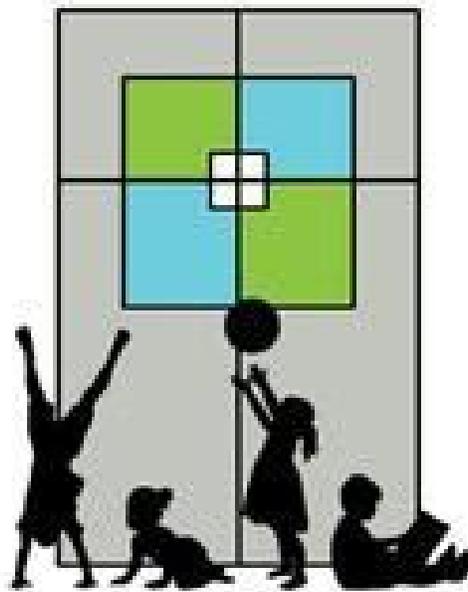


# Children's Ministries Manual

GRACE CHURCH MONTEREY BAY



## Children of Grace

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# Children's Ministry Vision

Children's ministry exists to help parents shepherd their children by:

1. Providing loving, safe, and caring interaction with their children
2. Teaching children the Gospel
3. Teaching children the character of God

For God to be worshipped and glorified, children's ministry will attempt to evangelize children as well as teach them the character of God in age-appropriate ways. In a safe and clean environment, children's ministry will provide an attractive, captivating, and enjoyable place for children to learn about God. Children's ministry evangelizes children, equips servants, and encourages parents.

Thank you so much for being willing to serve in such a critical ministry. Especially in a church like ours, with so many children and a heart for another generation, you are a needed and valuable part of the work of the church. With joy, we take very seriously our responsibility to care for the children of our church, from their spiritual needs to their physical safety. Because of that concern, this manual attempts to outline key procedures and policies without being overly prescriptive for every situation. Please take care to use your best judgement and initiative to protect and care for our children to whom you minister.

## GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

All children's ministry workers should:

- Love children and parents.
- Desire to serve with faithfulness, humility, and joy.
- Be a member of Grace Church Monterey Bay.
- Complete a children's ministry application.
- Have pastoral approval of ministry application.
- Agree to allow us to run a background check.

- Interact with children, parents, fellow workers, and children's ministry staff in a kind and loving way.
- Ensure that our facilities are a safe and enjoyable place for every child.
- Immediately report all suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior to children's ministry leadership.
- Immediately report all incidents, accidents, illnesses, and emergencies to children's ministry leadership.
- Follow and enforce all children's ministry policies.

## APPROVAL PROCESS

### Membership:

Becoming a children's ministry worker begins with becoming a member at GCMB. Every children's ministry worker should be a member of Grace Church, completing all membership requirements and approved by the elders.

**\*\*Minors** (under the age of 18) do not have to be confirmed as members.

-Pastoral leadership can also waive this requirement if it can be verified that the applicant was approved as an adult to work with children in another congregation and is in good standing with that congregation.

### APPLICATION

All children's ministry workers should complete the GCMB Children's Ministry Application, which includes a request for two non-family references, agreement with the GCMB doctrinal statement, and consent to a background check.

### BACKGROUND CHECK

Every children's ministry worker must agree to allow us to run a background check. Without a background check, you will not be placed on the approved workers' list.

## SAFETY

The Children's Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the Children's

Building is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Children's Building or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving. On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In an emergency, call 911 and the children's ministry leader. In an evacuation, the lead teacher should take the attendance records. Care should be taken to get every child from the room safely and quickly to the outside safety zones.

## MODESTY

When deciding what to wear, consider what will be visible when sitting,

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bending, or leaning over. There should not be any cleavage, upper thigh, midriff (front or back), or undergarments exposed.

## HEALTH GUIDELINES

Children/servers should not be in children's ministry if any of the following is true:

- has green mucus.
- has a fever over 100 degrees.
- has been vomiting in the last 48 hours.
- has head lice.
- has pink eye.
- has a communicable disease (covid-19, measles, chicken pox, etc).

If a child exhibits any sign of illness, call the parents.

To help minimize the spread of sickness, anti-bacterial gel is provided in each classroom. Use sanitizer/hand wipes before snacks, after bathroom trips, and after sneezes and coughs.

*\*\*Due to COVID regulations, all volunteers will be wearing face masks/shields, and temperatures will be taken of every child, volunteer, and staff member upon entering the Children's Ministry Building.*

## WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

### **Infants:**

- One worker for every three children (ideal)
- One worker for every six children (max)

### **Crawlers:**

- One worker for every four children (ideal)
- One worker for every six children (max)

### **2-3 years:**

- One worker for every six children (ideal)

- One worker for every nine children (max)

### **3-4 years:**

- One worker for every eight children (ideal)
- One worker for every twelve children (max)

### **4-10 years:** one worker for every 15 children (ideal)

one worker for every 20 children (max)

*Note: Children's ministry leadership has the right to evaluate the needs of each room and to exceed the max numbers listed in the above ratios.*

## **TWO ADULT RULE**

- Two trained adults will be present at all of GCMB's activities and classes involving children. A person new to the church, participating less than six months in activities of the church, must work with a trained adult for any activities with children.
- If absolutely necessary, a teacher or nursery caregiver may work alone if there is visual access to the room (open door or room with a window in the door).
- Exceptions may be made to this two-adult rule when teenage workers are approved to work with a trained adult.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

GCMB is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, GCMB has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

- Side-to-side hugging, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection (such as high-fives) between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children may be held when in need of attention or comfort. Toddlers and preschoolers should be held on the knees rather than on the lap.
- Inappropriate touching and displays of affection are forbidden (touch or interaction with children in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating). Any activity of this type is illegal, as well as a violation of trust and completely inappropriate. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching, or displays of affection should be immediately reported to children's ministry leadership.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child and should never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected. No child should be made to feel guilty if they do not wish to participate in

these expressions of affection. Children will be made aware that they are free to participate or not, as they feel comfortable.

- Corporal punishment or verbal abuse is never permitted. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management.

## OPEN CLASSROOMS

Church staff, parents, and church members may visit classrooms and child-care rooms at any time without prior notice. Children's ministry leaders and roamers will make periodic observations of childcare rooms and classrooms during the times when children's programs are being conducted.

## CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

All adults participating in programs involving contact with children will be guided by the following constructive discipline guidelines in order to maintain classroom safety and order:

1. If a child is behaving inappropriately, verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another). Tell the child specifically what he or she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building." If this is not effective, the child should be guided to another activity.
2. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed in an area of the room where he or she will work alone, away from the other students—but not alone with an adult—for a brief period of time, the

number of minutes not to exceed the age of the child.

- a. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with a clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child.
- b. *Do not physically hold the child in time-out.*
- c. Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly. Just two more minutes.")
- d. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in more time-out. Follow this with praise.
- e. Please inform parents or children's coordinator when they come to pick up their child if the child has willfully and seriously misbehaved. Describe without exaggeration, anger, or criticism what the child did and how the behavior was handled.
- f. If the child is a danger to themselves or other children, text the parent to come pick up the child immediately.

## BATHROOM ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

### Diapering

- Only adult female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
  - Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers. If working in a nursery room by yourself, walkie talkie the roamers to come and be present.
  - Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
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- Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the check-in system.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- Children should be changed on changing stations only.

## Toilet training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only adult female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with a child of either sex.
- When children are taken into bathrooms, the door will be left partially open.
- Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before they leave the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration form. ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded. Ask her if she needs to go.")
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing, as needed.
- Workers may assist a child with wiping if needed (with gloves).

## Preschoolers and school-age children

*Parents of preschool-age children should take their children to the restroom immediately before dropping them off for care. This will assist the classroom volunteers in providing proper supervision and meeting worker-to-child ratios within the classroom at all times.*

School-age children will be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed by the roamer volunteers. Roamer volunteers are responsible for taking children to the bathroom. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never be alone when taking a child to the restroom.

If a roamer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she will be accompanied by the other roamer. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another roamer.

### Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special-needs individuals. Parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all special-needs individuals over the age of 4.

# PERSONAL CONDUCT

## Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any *GCMB* facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

## Sexually-Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child.

## Sexually-Oriented Materials

Staff members and volunteers in *Children's Ministries* at *GCMB* are prohibited from possessing any sexually-oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

## Tobacco Use

*GCMB* requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, and during *GCMB* activities and programs. *GCMB* maintains tobacco-free facilities.

## Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. *GCMB* staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of

children. To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

## PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

### Supervision

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

### Digital Privacy

A key ingredient for a safe and healthy experience is the respect for privacy. Advances in technology have enabled new forms of social interaction that may extend beyond the appropriate use of cameras or recording devices.

- To ensure full participation and the opportunity for a positive experience, children may be prohibited from bringing handheld electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, laptops, iPods, tablets, etc.) to youth events or other church-sponsored functions.
- Children and adults shall not send sexually explicit or suggestive texts, images, videos, or other content electronically. Children and adults shall not post sexually-explicit materials on websites or social media sites.
- Children and adults can opt out of having their photos appear on the GCMB website to protect privacy. Further, as a volunteer, please do not take photos of children or post pictures of children on social media as some parents may not approve.

## Identification Badges

All individuals approved to work in Children's Ministries will be easily recognized by a church-issued name sticker upon check-in. No individual without a name sticker is permitted to work with the children.

## Medication

To the greatest extent possible, parents should plan to administer routine medications at home.

## RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to GCMB staff members or volunteers, GCMB incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. *Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.* Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care **only** to the parent or legal guardian who checked in the child before service. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child. The person picking up the child **must** have the coordinating sticker.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact a children's ministry leader or pastor before releasing the child.

## PARENTAL CONDUCT

### Parental Contact

Parents who leave a child in the care of GCMB staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted via text message if their child becomes ill, injured, is inconsolable, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

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## Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at GCMB. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. Parents who are members are encouraged to serve in children's ministry. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at GCMB will be required to complete the GCMB volunteer application and screening process.

## CHILD ABUSE POLICIES

### Abuse Tolerance

**GCMB has a zero tolerance for abuse.** It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at GCMB to act in the best interest of all children in every program. Those who accept the special responsibility of working with children at Grace Church agree to:

- Treat children with respect and dignity.
- Do their best to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation from occurring to children participating in activities.
- Not engage in or condone acts of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
- Report any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations.

All members, visitors, and guests at GCMB are expected to follow our policies. The intention of these policies is to protect, not to substantially interfere with the nurturing, teaching, and supervising of children.

Anyone who witnesses or learns of the physical or sexual abuse of a child shall immediately report it to the police and then notify the children's ministry leader and pastor. *It is GCMB policy to forward reports of child abuse to the appropriate governmental authority, as required by state law and church regulations. GCMB will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigations of allegations of child abuse.*

**\*All GCMB children's ministry volunteers are required to take a 1 hour sexual abuse identification training. Within this training, there will be further preventive training included.**

## GCMB YOUTH VOLUNTEERS (UNDER AGE 18)

GCMB welcomes youth volunteers. Youth volunteers are required to serve alongside their parent(s) who must be GCMB members. Each youth volunteer is required to fill out an application and background check form. The GCMB Children's Ministries Manual must be read and signed by the youth volunteer's parent. Due to the detail of various topics addressed in the manual, GCMB leaves it to the parents' discretion on how much to share with their child. Youth volunteers are expected to be able to take instruction well from adult volunteers and demonstrate helpfulness and a heart for service.

## SCHEDULING

Our desire is to schedule you for the times and classrooms you most want to serve while asking you to miss no more than three worship services in a three-month rotation. To help make this possible, please respond to any scheduling requests promptly. As much as possible, please check your personal calendar carefully so you can fully commit to the times for which you are scheduled. If you are unable to serve on your scheduled time, *please arrange for your own replacement*. Trading with another worker or finding a sub are the two ways to replace yourself. We will have teachers in each classroom, as well as two roamers to assist each classroom when necessary. Make sure you communicate with your replacement what role you are scheduled for. Please remember that an adult should be replaced by another adult, not a youth worker. Please communicate any changes to the nursery scheduler.

## TEACHING

The teaching moment is the key of all children's ministry events. Far from

providing babysitting or childcare alone, children's ministry exists to teach God's Word to children of all ages. The biblical basis for this concept is found in Ephesians 6:1-3 and Deuteronomy 6:6-9. At Grace, we want to constantly consider that the children we minister to are their parents' primary responsibility. Each week, classroom servers will be provided with a curriculum to teach.

*Please review and study the lesson before each Sunday.* Parents teach their children all week long. We have only a few hours on Sunday. Let's make the most of our time, studying carefully and giving our energy fully. At the same time, let's not have an inflated view of our own self-importance. Children's ministry is for humble servants.

## **Classroom Responsibilities**

### BEFORE CHURCH

- *The week before your scheduled Sunday, read over the curriculum*
- Check into check in station at 10:00
- Turn on lights
- Turn on heater (if needed)
- Make sure rooms are tidy
- Prepare snacks/water: pour snacks and water into Dixie cups

### DURING CHURCH

- Read over special instructions for each child
- Play time for 20-25 minutes
- Lesson
- Craft
- Snack
- Gather all children into fellowship room when queued on walkie talkie for worship song

## AFTER CHURCH

- Clean up all toys and disinfect all used toys in classroom
- Make sure all large toys are put away in designated spaces
- Lights off
- Heater off
- Make sure all windows are closed
- Charge walkie talkie at charging station
- Lock the door

## Roamer Responsibilities

### BEFORE CHURCH

- Check in to the check in station by 10:00
- Walk children to their correct classroom

### DURING CHURCH

- Check in on each room periodically to help assist wherever needed. Primarily stay in the toddler room (2-4 year olds).
- When called on walkie talkie, BOTH roamers go walk children to the bathroom
- When taking a child to the restroom, both roamers need to stay outside the restroom with the door open. If a child needs assistance, one roamer may enter to help assist the child with the door open.
- Go to toddler room when last song is playing and help bring children to the fellowship room

### AFTER CHURCH

- Make sure iPads are charging
  - Disinfect iPad station
  - Clean up any floor mats or toys left in fellowship room
  - Charge walkie talkie at charging station
  - Lock door
-

## STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

I have received and read a copy of GCMB's Children's Ministries Manual and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at GCMB. I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by GCMB. I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at GCMB at any time. (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.) I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between GCMB and me. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked. I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

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Staff Member or Volunteer's Name (please print)

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Staff Member or Volunteer's Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have read the manual, please sign and date above.

Email this page electronically signed to Trevor Ice:

trevor@gracemontereybay.org