Dear Children’s Ministry Volunteer,

Thank you so much for choosing to make a difference in the lives of the children in our church! Our goal is that every child here at Redeemer Community Church would experience the love of Jesus through those they come in contact with. I realize the responsibility of Christian education belongs to the family; however, we as a church need to be a strong encouragement and support to families. Our Children’s Ministry is committed to providing Jesus Christ’s example of love and acceptance to the children we minister to. Additionally, we are committed to Biblical teaching to help our children grow in their love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Please review and familiarize yourself with the information contained in this handbook, as it is designed for two reasons. To help you be effective in your ministry with the children, and for your safety.

I look forward to serving alongside you in this exciting ministry! Please feel free to contact me or any of our staff if you have any questions or concerns regarding the Children’s Ministry.

Blessings!

Dione Mahan
Volunteer Requirements

These are requirements that all Children’s Ministry Volunteers at Redeemer Community Church must comply with and adhere to.

You must have a personal relationship with Jesus that is evident by your life and your testimony.

Redeemer Community Church must be considered your home church and you must regularly attend services.

Please contact the Children’s Ministry Director, if you are unable to fulfill your commitment. This will allow time to find a substitute for your class.

Prepare your lesson before you enter the classroom. We will provide you with all the tools and training for your classroom. Please arrive at least 20 minutes early to set up your class, and stay until the last student is picked up.

As a Children’s Ministry Volunteer at Redeemer Community Church you must adhere to and comply with all safety policies and procedures in this Handbook.
Volunteer Guidelines

Here are a few guidelines to help your time with the children you minister to be the most effective. The Children’s Ministry has all the supplies that you might need and these will be gathered and placed in rooms prior to the class. If you would like something unusual for class, let us know. You may leave a message for supplies you might need.

Don’t forget to think ahead.

Children must be signed in by an adult and children given a wristband with a corresponding number. Adults will receive a laminated card with their child’s corresponding number or children’s corresponding family and child numbers. If it is necessary to contact a parent during service, use this number for identifying them.

Review the lesson, pray, and make a plan! Gather your Bible and supplies and you are ready for your class!

Always begin with prayer and end with prayer. Give children an opportunity to pray for things that are on their heart. God hears each one! Each is precious to Him!

Everyone gets to participate in worship through music! Join in, it’s fun! They are looking to you, the teacher, to be their example!

Parents may only pick up their children if they have their card with corresponding number to their children. Always try to have the same person sign kids in and out. At the end of class parents with the wristbands will be allowed in to pick up their children and upon check out wristband number MUST be checked. Children should leave their wristbands with the volunteer. Our check in system is for safety and emergency purposes, so we ask that you make every effort to adhere to it.
Age & Grade Characteristics

Preschool Level:
Knowing the children you work with is something that we would all agree is a basic requirement prior to ministering to them; but, this basic step is all-too-often neglected. It’s like buying insurance. We don’t want to sit through the slide show of the history of the insurance company, we just want to sign the policy and be done with it.
Jesus was well aware of those to whom He taught. His lessons showed a certain tailoring, to fit the needs and interests of the people. When He talked to farmers, He spoke of sowing seeds and the plight caused by weeds and birds. When He spent time with fishermen, He related the lofty concepts of the Christian life to fish and nets. He knew just how to “hook” His listeners with words and concepts they were interested in. He was an example of a teacher who showed His love for the people by getting to know them. He hasn’t changed a bit.

Let’s look at some of the general characteristics of the different age groups that you will meet in the children’s ministry.

Elementary Level:
The elementary aged child is an ever-changing creation. Just when you think you know them, the smoke from their smoldering birthday candles seems to signal a new era complete with personality changes, advanced discipline needs, and expanding horizons. The tricky part of working with this age child is that we are required to keep up with the changes. If we lag behind, we will lose our potential for being a role model.
Even though the personalities are changing drastically, the basic needs of every child remains consistent. I believe the basic needs of security, significance, and belonging, are never packed away with the other “toys” of our childhood. We, as adults, keep them with us forever. If we can understand our needs, we will better understand the needs of those around us.
Nursery (1 - 12 Months)

General Characteristics
- Helplessly dependent on adults to meet his needs
- Communicates needs by crying
- Requires individual attention (Holding, rocking, etc.)
- Sleeps a great deal
- Learns by the attitudes of those around them

Needs
- Loving physical care (feeding, changing, etc.)
- Clean surroundings
- Security at their level:
  - Familiar surroundings (sights, sounds, smells)
  - Familiar people caring for them
  - Consistent schedule
  - The presence of their parent(s)

Level of Understanding
- Absorbs the attitudes of those who care for them
- Can understand simple words
- Beginning to recognize signs of “love”
- Can connect places, situations with concepts of “good” or “bad”

Toddler (13 - 24 Months)

General Characteristics
- Constantly moving
- Learning to talk
- Uses all five senses to learn
- Limited vocabulary (two or three word phrases)
- Short attention span (two minutes maximum)
- Requires individual attention
- Developing social skills
- Fearful
- Susceptible to sicknesses

Needs
- Loving physical care (snacks, changing, etc.)
- Frequent change of activity (variety)
- Frequent rest times
- Room to “explore”
- Personal attention from adults they know
- Familiar surroundings (sights, sounds, smells)
- Familiar people caring for them
- The presence of their parent(s)

Level of Understanding
- Most learning is still through the senses
- Concepts of God, Jesus, and the Bible can be introduced
- Concepts of good and bad can be further understood
4 & 5 Year Olds

General Characteristics
- Very active - enjoys imitating
- Attention span of five to ten minutes
- Enjoys playing with other children
- Forming concepts of social behavior (teamwork, partnership, etc.)
- Inquisitive - large imagination
- Learning to relate to adults other than parents
- Further developing sense of right and wrong
- Learning to share (with encouragement)
- Growing vocabulary - able to express self in sentences with feeling
- Thinks of God in personal terms
- Responds to Jesus with simple trust

Needs
- Loving, supportive care
- Interaction with adults who are interested in them
- Frequent change of activities
- Consistent models of Christian behavior
- New or different words defined
- Activities that involve physical movement
- Freedom to explore new things (places, thoughts, etc.)
- Clear signs of love shown to them
- Respect from those around them
- Feeling valuable (significant)
- Unbroken trust/promises
- Knowledge that God & significant adults will not abandon them

Level of Understanding
- Can understand that God created the world
- Can reason and deal with questions regarding the “whys” of life
- Can learn through humor
- Can learn through role-playing or role-reversal
- Beginning to read simple words
- Still learns, thinks in concrete terms

First & Second Grade

General Characteristics
- Active, Talkative, Imaginative
- Likes group activities
- Inquisitive - eager to learn
- Seeks personal attention from the teacher
- Building attitudes about self
- Learning masculine or feminine roles
- Learning to read confidently, Learning to write
- Developing conscience and sense of morality
- Still thinks in concrete terms
- Emotionally immature
- Attention span of 20+ minutes
- Peer group pressure beginning
- Life's values rotate around having fun
- Selfish, but capable of caring and giving to others

Needs
- Loving, respectful, patient care
- Variety in activities
- Freedom to express themselves orally
- Opportunities to exhibit the things they have learned
- Abstract concepts presented in concrete terms
- Sense of belonging among their peers
- Support and belief in abilities from their teacher
- Sense of belonging, unending love from their parent(s)
- Sense of unconditional love and forgiveness from God
- Freedom to make, and learn from mistakes

Level of Understanding
- Genuinely loves God and Jesus as real people
- Appreciates the Bible as a special book
- Prays sincerely
- Beginning to understand what sin is and applying Biblical principles to life
Third Through Fifth Grade

General Characteristics
• Energetic
• Still thinks concrete terms (may think abstractly)
• Likes group activities
• Asks challenging questions
• Enjoys personal attention
• Continuing to build personal attitudes
• Developing specific interests (hobbies, etc.)
• Strong sense of morality, fairness
• Emotionally immature
• Eager to learn about things that interests him
• Memorizes easily
• Wants to help
• Attention span of 20+ minutes (depending on subject or activity)
• Fashion conscious
• Interested in being popular or “cool”
• Has a vision of being older, or capable of doing anything

Needs
• Supportive, loving care
• New experiences (educational and memory-building)
• Freedom to express their self within respectable boundaries
• Security at their own level
• Sense of belonging among their peers
• Support and belief in abilities from their teacher
• Sense of belonging, unending love from their parent(s)
• Sense of unconditional love and forgiveness from God
• Consistent discipline/reward system
• Freedom to make, and learn from mistakes

Level of Understanding
• Can understand cause/effect relationships
• Can understand order, chronology

• Able to apply Biblical principles to life and understands the need for salvation
• Able to know and accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior

Material adapted from Lebanon Calvary Chapel
References:
Redeemer Community Church

Safe Church Policies and Guidelines

For Children from Infant through Grade 5

Supervision of Children

The Children’s Ministry staff and volunteers are responsible for the supervision of children during ministry activities, including observing the environment and equipment for unsafe situations, removing children from potentially dangerous conditions, and reporting problems immediately. Ministry staff should make sure that anyone who has not been successfully screened does not have unsupervised access to children. Supervision of children will be guided by the two-adult rule described in the next section.

Parents are responsible for their children up until the time the activity is scheduled to begin and after the activity’s scheduled ending time. Leaders are responsible for informing parents of the beginning and ending times. When children arrive to any church ministry or program, they are expected to remain in that program until the program ends and supervision is transferred back to parents. Children may not leave the program early without a parent’s permission. A child’s failure to follow this policy will be considered unacceptable behavior, and discipline policies will be enforced (see separate section on discipline). Children’s ministry leaders are not responsible for children who do not show up at a ministry activity, even if their parents believe they are at the activity.

The Two-Adult Rule

The Two-Adult Rule states that there must always be two non-related adults present when supervising one or more children. This rule is designed for the safety of children as well as adults, and is required across all ministry areas with few exceptions (see guidelines for these cases below). Planning ahead will help avoid the potential of being alone with one or more children. Compliance to the two-adult rule includes the following:

• There must always be two volunteer approved adults or one approved adult and one approved teen present when supervising one or more children.

• The adults must not be related family members (a married couple would be considered “related”). If two related adults are teaching together, a third screened person must be in attendance.

• The adults should be in sight of each other at all times.
Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule

The purpose of the Two-Adult Rule is to make sure the actions of any one leader are known to at least one other leader and to encourage leaders to support each other in ministry. Guidelines for exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule (outlined below) follow this same idea—that even when only one adult is present, the actions of that leader are known and visible to others. This is accomplished by visible and public locations, as well as communication with other ministry staff.

Unplanned Situations with Only One Adult

Occasionally, leaders will find themselves without another adult present due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed.

- Immediately inform the Pastor, Executive Pastoral Assistant, or Director of Children’s or Youth Ministry.
- Visible location—For any time when there is only one adult present, the group must be in a location that is visible to others with an unobstructed window, open door, etc.

Youth Serving as Leaders

We encourage older children to serve as leaders for children in younger grades. A youth leader, age 14 or older, may count as an adult under the Two-Adult Rule.

Check In and Check Out Procedures

Parents are responsible for their child until their child is checked into and once their child is checked out of a church ministry program. Programs serving children from Preschool through Grade 5 should have check in and out procedures which require the parent to sign in when they bring the child to the program and sign out when they pick up the child at the end of the program. This means that parents are expected to escort their child to the check in area and that children in Preschool through Grade 5 should not be released from a program or activity without parents coming to pick them up and signing them out.

Children may not leave the program early without a parent’s permission. If a child wanders away from the program or leaves the church campus without a parent’s permission, an adult leader should immediately alert the Program Director who will contact the parents.

Exceptions to the Check In and Check Out Procedures

On Sundays the child may begin service with parent/parents in the worship center, parents will be required to sign in before service begins. The sign in forms are conveniently located in classrooms. The children will be dismissed during service; the Children’s Ministry Staff and volunteers to ensure that all children leaving the church will arrive safely to their classroom.
**Bathroom Procedures**

Preschool and Kindergarten children use the restrooms within the classroom. Adults must not enter a private restroom with a child. If there are no restrooms within the classroom, children must be escorted to the restrooms. Children in grades K-5 must be escorted (it can be a youth leader) to the restroom. The escort must take at least 2 children of the same gender. The escort must determine if anyone is in the restroom. If the restroom is empty, the children may go in and the escort must remain outside the restroom and listen for the children in the restroom. If someone is in the restroom, enter the restroom with the children (if same gender) or wait until it is empty. If another person arrives, go into the restroom (if it’s for your gender) and stay there while the children use the facility. It is understood that having an adult taking children to the bathroom may leave one adult alone in the room with multiple children for a short period of time.

**Discipline**

The number one rule in ministry with children is that each of us is a Child of God and should be treated with the kind of respect, love, and support that is expected by the commandment in Scripture to love one another. Clear rules and expectations and consistent messages about behavior are the key to effective discipline procedures. Occasionally, children have trouble following the rules or display disruptive behavior. In these cases, the following steps will be taken.

1. The teacher or leader will talk with the child and state clearly what the problem behavior is and what the child should do instead. For a younger child, the leader will attempt to redirect the child to another activity.

2. If the child continues to exhibit problem behavior, the teacher/leader will give a warning to the child and have the program or ministry area leader talk individually to the child.

3. Upon the third warning, the child will be removed from the activity and a parent will be contacted. Unless otherwise discussed with a parent, the child will be welcomed back at the next ministry activity.

**Zero Tolerance**

There will be zero tolerance for behavior that is deemed out of control (intent to harm self or others, destructive or abusive behavior) by the teacher or leader.

1. Behavior deemed out of control will result in immediate removal of the child from the ministry activity and personal family contact by the Ministry Staff.

2. If the offense is an illegal activity, the police will be contacted.

3. The child may be suspended from ministry activities for an amount of time determined by the Director of Children’s Ministry.
4. The child and family will be treated with respect and love, and the child will be welcomed back to ministry activities after the suspension period provided he/she is ready to respect the rules of the ministry.

**Physical Contact**

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between ministry leaders and children. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Examples of positive and appropriate forms of affection:

- Brief hugs or side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives, hand slapping and fist taps
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during group prayer

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry. Many of these behaviors are used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation. Others may be considered to be sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
• Occupying a bed with a child or youth
• Touching knees or legs of children or youth
• Wrestling with children or youth
• Tickling children or youth
• Piggyback rides
• Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
• Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
• Any form of unwanted affection
• Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development
• Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing
• Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
• Private meals with individual children or youth

Sleepovers
There are no sleepover activities for children in Preschool through Grade 6. Guidelines for Children

Field Trips/Driving
If children are taken off campus, parents must be pre-informed and must pre-approve the trip. If the children are transported in vehicles, signed releases and “Consent to Treat” must be obtained and carried on the field trip. All children under 12 must be transported in the rear seat(s) and each must have their own seat belt.

Drivers must be over 21 and have had their driver’s licenses for at least 3 years. Vehicles used must be fully insured.

Communication Outside of Usual Ministry Functions:
All communication to preschool through 5th grade children should be through the parents. Leaders of children may call children in their program if the leader first talks to the parent and gets verbal permission. Leaders may send notes to children on postcards (not in envelopes). Leaders of children may e-mail children only if the leader also cc’s the parent. Leaders of children should not contact children through Instant Messaging or Social networking, text messaging, or other forms of electronic communication without express written permission from parent or guardian.
**Emergencies and Injuries**

Ministry staff and volunteers should be prepared to protect children in the case of emergencies. Fire escape routes are posted and fire drills will happen randomly. Volunteers should have the following phone numbers programmed into their cell phones. Note that 911 calls by cell phones are often not as direct as dialing the local emergency authorities.

If calling from a cell phone, immediately tell operator

“I have a medical emergency in New Port Richey, FL at address 9230 Ridge Road, 34654”

Church Office: 9am-1 pm, Monday, Wednesday, Friday

10pm-3pm Tuesday and Thursday

During worship, the Church Emergency can be activated by sending someone to alert an elder or deacon.

**Medical Supplies**

A number of basic medical supplies are located in each classroom. For medical problems that require more serious attention call 911 or local emergency phone number.

**Threats of Violence Against Others or to Harm Self**

Leaders may receive information that a child or other person has thoughts or desires to harm themselves or others. This information should be taken seriously and should be reported immediately to the Director of Children’s Ministry or a Pastor. If the child seems to have the imminent intent to do harm, a leader or volunteer should stay with the child and call 911.