



Apostles' Kids Ministry

Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

For Parents and Volunteers

Updated October 2017

We hope that this handbook provides you with information that is helpful. If you have any questions, suggestions, or complaints, please feel free to contact the Children's Ministry Director.

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Dear Church of the Apostles,

Jesus said “Let the little children come unto me and do not hinder them, for to such belong the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 19:14) When we say that children are not just part of the church, they are the church, we are affirming that children are welcomed into the Kingdom by the King himself.

This is a generous and glorious invitation for us all to follow. By issuing the Kingly decree to “let the children come to me”, Jesus is making clear that all people, men women, and especially in this case children, are welcomed and cherished in his Kingdom. It is equally a call for us, his Church, to value, equip, and love everyone as he loves everyone.

The Children’s Ministry at Church of the Apostles seeks to come alongside parents to provide support as they raise their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4) We work together with parents to love, value, honor, and equip children in their faith.

One way we do this is through our Children’s Ministry during the Sermon each Sunday morning. Children follow the cross to Sunday School and are ministered to and equipped by loving, volunteer teachers and assistants. They hear stories from the Bible, answer questions, participate in activities, and even have a light snack. All of this works together to welcome the little children.

In order to provide a safe, friendly, God-honoring atmosphere that is optimal for equipping kids, we have developed some policies and procedures to ensure that our children and volunteers are safe as they engage one another each Sunday. The guidelines in this booklet are written so parents, kids, teachers, and assistants know what to expect from one another.

It is our privilege to serve parents and kids as we all follow Christ our King.

Peace and Hope,

Brian+
The Rev. Brian Murphy Rector

Apostles' Kids Verse and Mission Statement

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'

—Matthew 19:14

We believe that children are the church. As such, they participate in all aspects of our mission at Church of the Apostles, in their own unique and fun way, while in a safe and nurturing environment:

... We teach God's word through Bible stories and memorization. And, in partnering with parents, children are encouraged to apply it to their daily living — embracing for themselves the Gospel message of salvation.

... They inherit the rich heritage of Anglican faith and worship by attending the latter part of the worship service and experiencing a blessing (or in taking communion themselves), by learning about liturgy, and being prompted towards sacramental living.

... We help them proclaim the good news of Jesus to others through service, giving, and prayer.

I. Policies

Wellness

Children must be symptom free from the following (without medication) for at least 24 hours before entering the classroom:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye or other infection)
- Rash
- Nasal drainage which is green or yellow
- Sore throat
- Open sores
- Cold
- Excessive coughing
- Lice

If a child develops any of these symptoms while checked in, the parent will be texted or sought out from the service in order to pick up their child.

All allergies are recorded in the classroom binders. Parents of children with severe allergies may request an ID bracelet for their child to wear. If there is a possibility of use of an EpiPen, the parent must advise the teacher at the time of each check-in. EpiPens must be supplied by the parents of the affected child.

Injury and First Aid

We can administer ONLY band-aids and ice packs.

If a child is injured while in the care of the children's ministry, the teacher/volunteer will immediately notify the Children's Ministry Director. The Director will be responsible for advising the child's parent. All injuries must be reported no matter how minor they may seem.

Safety and Security

It is of utmost importance that our children be taught and nurtured in a responsible and safe environment. We also desire that our teachers/volunteers be protected from allegations of misconduct.

- Each volunteer in our ministry is required to read and abide by the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.

- In the event that there is a need for last minute volunteers (who have not been screened according to policy), the individuals responding will be cleared for temporary duty by the Children’s Ministry Director and placed with an experienced teacher/volunteer who has completed the application process and been cleared for service.

Types of Emergency Procedures

Evacuation

- If there is a fire, pull the fire alarm, evacuate, and call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so.
- If a fire alarm sounds (or an evacuation is ordered) while parents are in service, parents are asked to follow the evacuation route from the auditorium. Parents flooding the childcare area will cause considerable congestion and prevent the children from being safely evacuated from the building. Children and parents will be re-united as soon as safely possible.
- Teachers: When evacuating, bring the class list to ensure all the children are with you and then use the nearest, safest path to the exterior of the building. It is important to know ahead of time all of the exit paths available to you, should the nearest path be obstructed or deemed unsafe at the time of the emergency. (see posted floor plans on church cases or in Appendix B)

Lockdown

If you are in a classroom when a lockdown is announced:

- Ensure the door is closed and locked.
- Turn off lights.
- Gather in the safest area of the room (always think “out of the line of sight from the door”)
- When in lockdown, disregard the fire alarm unless you perceive an actual fire near your safe space.

Floor Plan

Always take note of your exits, and all available routes to the exits. Listed below are exit doors to the exterior of the building relevant to the spaces used by Church of the Apostles. See Appendix B for the floor plan of our building.

Exits to the exterior of the building listed by door # (there are push bars on the inside of these doors, so you can always exit even if the door is locked on the outside):

- 19 (cafeteria)
- 21 (corridor alongside kitchen in cafeteria)
- 24 (corridor, stage right)
- 26 (corridor, stage left)
- 27 (lobby at the rear of the auditorium)
- 28 (classroom, room 120)

- 29 (corridor, outside cafeteria)

Restrooms and Diapering

Volunteers should help a child use the restroom only if the child is three (3) years or younger or if a disability dictates help. If a volunteer must enter the restroom she should leave the outer door of the restroom open. If a child is over three (3) years of age, the volunteer should check the restroom before the child enters and wait outside until the child exits.

- Parents are encouraged to take their potty-trained children to the restroom before check-in.
- If a bathroom visit is necessary in the preschool/Kindergarten class, make every attempt to bring the children as a group at a set time. Use a 2-adult rule and see the restroom policies above.
- Please talk with parents of those children who are unable to use the bathroom without assistance. You and the parent may work out a plan for when their child needs to use the bathroom.
- Only cleared volunteers, staff members, or the child's parents are permitted to change diapers and should always be changed in the full sight line of another adult. One hand must always be kept on the child and the child should never be left unattended on the changing pad.

Classes

The Children's Ministry offers classes for the following ages:

Through the entire service:

- Nursery: Infants through 3 years
- Preschool/Kindergarten: 3 years through Kindergarten

Children dismissed after worship in service (approx. 10:15):

- Lower Elementary: Grades 1-3
- Upper Elementary: Grades 4-6

Childcare for nursery and preschool/K opens 15 minutes before each Sunday morning service. Teachers must arrive 15 minutes prior to service to be available for children arriving at this time.

II. Volunteer Procedures and Responsibilities

Requirements to Serve

- Each volunteer is required to complete an application process, which includes a questionnaire and background check.
- Each volunteer must be an adult member of the church and be at least 18 years of age for volunteer Lead Teacher positions and 12 years of age for volunteer Teacher Assistant positions, with exceptions made on a case-by-case basis as decided by the Children's Ministry Director.
- Volunteers are expected to affirm the Creeds and the Jerusalem Declaration, and acknowledge and agree with the Apostle's Kids Mission Statement (see page 5).
- Volunteers are asked to make a service commitment of at least 9 months (school year) or 3 months (summer), and agree to attend any training/orientation meetings as needed.

Scheduling

- Volunteers will coordinate with the Children's Ministry Director concerning work schedules. Generally, Lead Teacher volunteers will serve for two weeks in a row, then have a month off. Teacher Assistants will serve once per month.
- Once a schedule is made, any changes should be made by switching with a team member. *It is the volunteer's responsibility to find a replacement if they are unable to work as scheduled and to notify the church Administrator and Children's Ministry Director of the change as soon as possible.* Team member contact information will be provided by the Children's Ministry Director.
- In the event of an emergency causing the volunteer to be late or absent, it is imperative the volunteer call or text the Administrator or Children's Ministry Director as soon as possible.

General

- Volunteers must be knowledgeable of and adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.
- Lead teacher volunteers are asked to spend time in the week before serving, reading over the curriculum and preparing the lesson. This is especially important in the upper elementary classrooms. It is the volunteer's responsibility to pick up their lesson the week before from the classroom binder, and/or arrive early to prepare any visuals.
- Teacher assistants are there to support the Lead Teachers and will take their lead from them. They will help control the behavior of the children during the lesson so the teacher can continue to teach. They assist in the checking in and out process. They should never serve without a qualified adult volunteer leading.

- Volunteers are asked to keep their cell phones on vibrate and refrain from use unless it is an emergency.
- Special treats or activities involving food outside the scheduled curriculum must be approved by the Children’s Ministry Director.
- No snacks or food *of any kind* may be brought in the classroom without prior approval from the Director.
- Volunteers will refrain from engaging in any conduct, activity (including the posting of questionable or inappropriate messages or material via internet or social media), or associations that may reflect negatively or bring discredit upon themselves, their position as a volunteer, and/or Church of the Apostles.
- Volunteers may not post any pictures of Sunday School activities to any social media outlet. If pictures of class activities are taken, they may be sent to the Children’s Ministry Director for appropriate use.
- Volunteers should feel free to ask the Children’s Ministry Director any time they need support. With God’s help, we will joyfully provide the necessary help.

Arrival and Set up

- Arrive a minimum of 15 minutes before the service begins (or sooner if you need additional preparation time). *Please be on time.* Keep in mind that tardiness is often contagious and adversely affects everyone.
- Post the classroom rules and setup the classroom check-in binder.
- Set out any materials needed for class.

Class Time

- Take note of any children wearing security tags reflecting an allergy alert.
- Review the classroom rules with the children each week. *Remember, repetition and consistency increases retention.*
- Volunteers and children will remain in the classroom at all times. Supervised restroom breaks are the only exceptions. (See restroom policies above.)
- Enjoy the children and the opportunity to minister to them.
- If the service goes for an extended period (i.e. You are finished with the curriculum and the service hasn’t ended), please see the “Extra Time Ideas” appendix at the end of this guidebook.
- Occasionally there will be approved guests in Sunday School, whether to read a book, do a special craft, or lead worship. This will be communicated from the Children’s Ministry Director via email the week prior.
- Grades 1-6 are to be dismissed at 11:05 and brought back into the service to quietly find their families. Nursery and Preschool/K children wait in their classrooms for their parents to sign them out at the Peace.

Verbal and Physical Interactions

It is always best to exercise caution when having any interactions with children. There are some that are appropriate and some that are not. The lists below are some examples of each:

- **Appropriate interactions may include the following:**
 - Bending down to the child's eye level, speaking kindly, and listening carefully
 - Taking a small child's hand and leading him/her to and from an activity
 - Putting an arm around the shoulders of a small child who needs comforting/quieting
 - Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm
 - Holding a baby or small child who is crying
 - Side-hugs, high fives, and handshakes
- **Inappropriate interactions include the following:**
 - Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you
 - Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit
 - Holding older children (grades 1-6 classes) or having them on your lap
 - Prolonged hugging of an older child
 - Inappropriate sexual discussion and/or jokes
 - Cursing, belittling, shaming or other harsh language that threatens or humiliates a child

Responding to Accusations of Abuse/Neglect

- See the attached Appendix A for signs of abuse and/or neglect
- If you suspect this, please note the name of the child, date, the concerning behavior and bring it to the immediate attention of the Children's Ministry Director.

Check-out/Departure Procedures

- Volunteers or parents must sign out every nursery or preschool-aged child before they are allowed to leave. Any take-home papers and/or crafts will be distributed at this time.
- When all the children have been dismissed, return classroom supplies to their respective cases and clear the white boards with anything that was added at the time of Sunday School.
- Sermons are always available online later in the week for the Sundays that you miss due to serving in Children's Ministry.

III. Parental Responsibility

For the safety and well-being of your child, we implore you to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.

Alerts and Requests

- If your child has any allergies, special needs or conditions, please note them at check-in to ensure that your child's teacher is aware.
- Please take your child to the restroom before you sign your child in.
- It is often beneficial for the parents to expedite the check-in process. This lessens separation anxiety and helps your child adjust to the classroom.
- If you ever have any concerns or questions about the curriculum, please bring these to the Children's Ministry Director.

Items You Bring

- Please make sure all of your child's belongings are clearly labeled, including diaper bags, cups, bottles, pacifiers, coats, etc.

Regular Attenders

- Nursery and Preschool/K: Parents, please sign your child in on the attendance sheet.
- Grades 1-6: Children will follow the Crucifer to their classroom upon dismissal from the worship service.
- Follow up with what your child learned at Sunday School during the week by using their take-home sheets, parent resource sheets, and/or worksheets that they complete in class. Talk and pray about the same topics.

First Time Visitors

- First time visitors must complete the green visitor sticker forms when checking in a child. Make sure to include any allergies and a cell phone number to use if there is a need to contact you during the service. Remove the section with the child's name, etc. and stick to the back of the child's shirt. Retain the other tag until pick-up.
- Upon pick-up, present the green tag and the number on your tag will be matched with the number on the child. Only then will the child be released from Sunday School.
- Please pick up a Visitor's Bag located at the Children's Ministry bulletin board. This has information about the church, as well as some goodies for your child when they are brought back into the service.

Returning Visitors

- Check-in your child using the green visitor sticker forms (see “First Time Visitors” above), but please consider completing a registration form. This will allow for your child to be formally entered into the attendance system and church family database.

Contacting Parents During Service

- We keep a list of all parents’ cell phone numbers in the room binders, to use for contacting a parent during the service. If there is an emergency, the Children’s Ministry Director will be alerted and will come and find a parent from the service.
- Some crying and fussing shortly after separation is normal in our younger classes, and usually subsides after a few minutes. If we are unable to comfort your child in 10-15 minutes, we will text you for assistance. Please keep your mobile phones on and in silent mode during the service.

Parent Volunteers

We encourage our parents to volunteer in our children’s ministry. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, please contact our Children’s Ministry Director.

IV. Miscellaneous

Snacks

- Children's hands must be cleaned/sanitized before eating snacks.
- A light snack is provided for children who are old enough. The usual snack is water and Goldfish, though occasionally there will be vanilla wafers or pretzels.
- If your child has allergies, please have this noted each time you check your child in. An allergy bracelet is available upon request.
- Children will be served only when they are seated. Children are prohibited from walking around with snacks or filled cups.
- Cups will be removed and discarded as soon as each child finishes.
- All bottles must be pre-mixed. Nursery workers are NOT allowed to mix formulas. This restriction is for your child's protection. Please have all bottles labeled with your child's name.

Activity Bags

- Activity bags are available for children to use during any part of the worship service. They can be found on the greeter's table in the lobby.
- Each bag has activity pages, coloring pages, markers, crayons, and other quiet activities.
- Please take any pages that have been used and return any unused pages to the folders. Pack up the bags and return them to the lobby when you are done with them.

V. Discipline and Classroom Management

Hebrews 12:7-11 tells us that discipline, though sometimes painful, produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those trained by it. It also tells us discipline should be born out of love and not be intended solely as punishment or behavioral control. It should be a growth mechanism through which we receive necessary correction, guidance, training, and molding of character.

Classroom Rules

- Listen when someone else is speaking.
- Raise your hand to speak during the lesson.
- Follow directions quickly.
- Be a caring friend.
- Do not touch the instruments.
- Do not take off your shoes.
- Have fun!!

Preventative Actions

- Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
- Establish and communicate realistic expectations.
- Focus on positive actions (and make use of the prize bin!)
- Be fair and consistent

Corrective Actions

- Handle situations individually as much as possible.
- Give a warning when a child fails to follow the rules.
- Remind the child of the rules.
- Explain why the behavior is unacceptable
- Redirect the child to something positive
- Explain the consequences of unacceptable behavior by describing the correct way to behave.
- If a child repeats the action, guide him/her to a quiet place, separate from the other children for a short, but designated period of time.
- After a third time, the child will be escorted to the Children's Ministry Director for appropriate discipline and parental notification.

Aggressive Behavior

- Biting, hitting, pushing, scratching, or pulling are considered aggressive behaviors and will be addressed promptly. If a child displays any of these behaviors, he or

she will be immediately escorted to the Children's Ministry Director for parental notification.

Appendix A: Child Protection Policies & Practices

As the Children's Ministry at Church of the Apostles, we want to *ensure the safety of the children God has entrusted to our care*. We are committed to instituting safeguards to protect the children from physical and sexual abuse.

1. Definition & Signs of Abuse:

According to the Department of Children and Families website, child abuse is a “non-accidental injury to a child which, regardless of motive, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by the person responsible for the child's care. Child abuse includes injuries, malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.”

The following are major signs of abuse. The presence of one of the signs or even several in combination, may not indicate that abuse has occurred. They may indicate a recent accident, or the presence of a medical condition, emotional illness or other problem. If a number of these signs occur together or if they reoccur frequently, child abuse or neglect might be the cause.

Signs of Neglect

Child:

- Poor hygiene, bad odor
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather
- Left alone, unsupervised for long periods Failure to thrive, malnutrition
- Untreated medical condition
- Constant hunger, begging or stealing food
- Extreme willingness to please
- Frequent absences from school
- Arriving early or staying late at school or play areas or other people's homes

Parent:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Signs of Emotional Damage

Child:

- Low self-esteem
- Self—denigration
- Severe depression
- Aggressive
- Withdrawn
- Severe anxiety
- Failure to learn

Parent:

- Constantly blames, belittles or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Signs of Physical Abuse

Child:

- Bruises; welts on face, neck, chest, back
- Injuries in the shape of objects (belt, cord)
- Unexplained burns on palms, soles of feet, back
- Fractures that are inconsistent with the account of how the injury occurred
- Untreated medical condition
- Extremes in behavior: very aggressive to withdrawn and shy
- Fear of going home
- Fear of parents and/or other adults

Parent:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes the child as 'evil' or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

Signs of Sexual Abuse

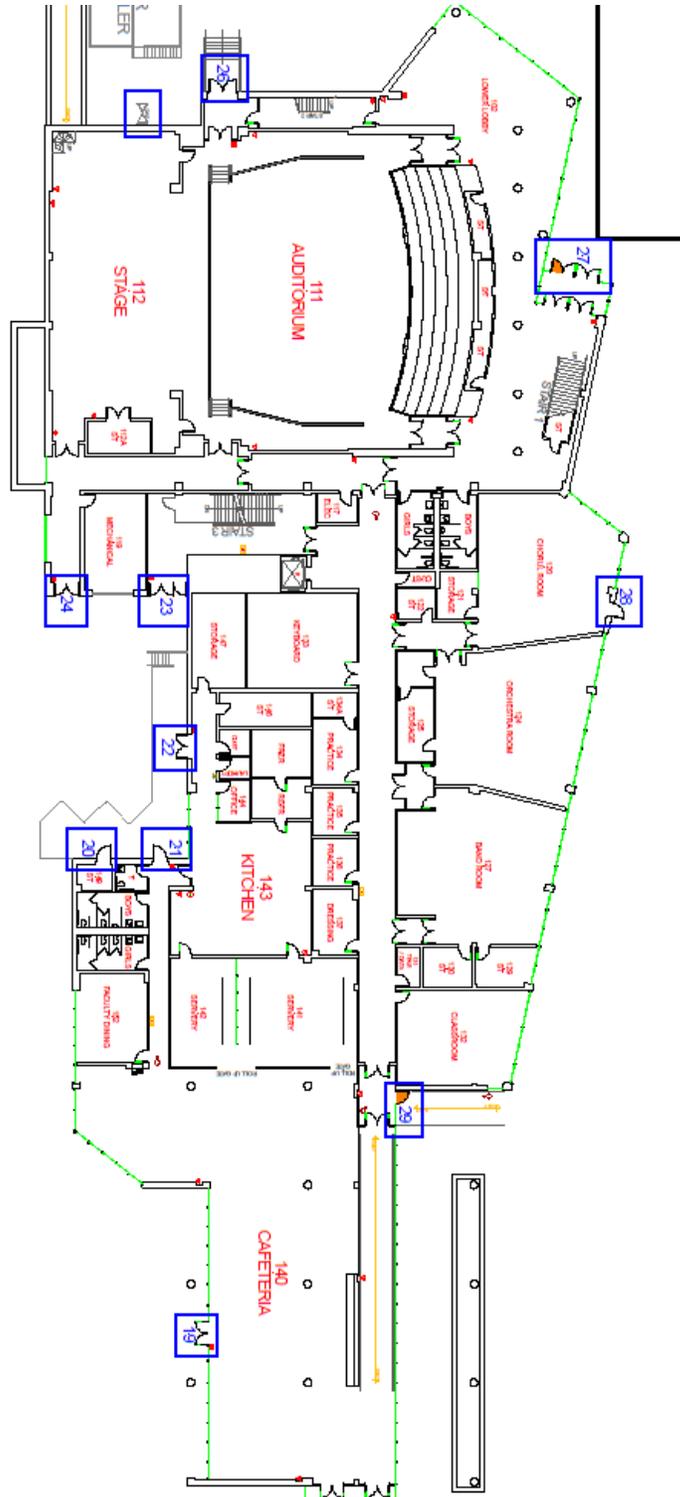
Child:

- Pain, swelling or itching in the genital area
- Bruises, bleeding, discharge in genital area
- Difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination, pain
- Stained or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease
- Refusal to take part in gym or other exercises
- Poor peer relationships
- Age-inappropriate interest in sex
- Drastic change in school achievement
- Running away or delinquency
- Regressive behavior

Parent:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

Appendix B: Roger Ludlow Middle School Floor Plan and Emergency Exits



Appendix C: Ideas for Extra Time (or more children than usual)

Nursery - Play music (CDs and CD player in nursery area). Read books. Get another helper (contact Children's Ministry Director).

Preschool/K - Check the back of the "Show Me Jesus" curriculum book for extra time activities that relate to each lesson!

Other ideas include:

Read a book from our children's library.

Play music (CD player in nursery area).

Play games (Dice game in music bin. Simon Says, Duck Duck Goose, etc. They also love to pretend to be animals.)

Grades 1-3 - Bible trivia games (located in grades 1-6 case) or sword drills (instructions and list of verses found in 1-6 case). Winner of most trivia questions or drills can pick from prize box located in grades 1-6 case.

Grades 4-6 - Bible trivia game (located in grades 1-6 case) or sword drills (instructions and list of verses found in 1-6 case). Winner of most trivia questions or drills can pick from prize box located in grades 1-6 case