

PARENT HANDBOOK



DELIGHTING IN GOD

REDEEMER CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

*Equipping the next generation
to delight in God's glory and declare that glory
to our neighbors and the nations!*

Dear Parents,

We are overjoyed to come alongside you and your child in our DIG and Nursery ministries for children. We trust the Lord to extend the riches of his mercies to us in Christ that we might serve as an encouragement to your parenting and a means of spiritual nourishment to your child. With Psalm 78, we long that the children of Redeemer Church would set their hope in God and remain steadfast in their faithfulness to him.

We urge you to read this handbook in its entirety. We designed this handbook to acquaint you with the goal of our children's ministry and to highlight the philosophy and distinctives of that ministry. Our handbook will also inform you of the policies and procedures required of all servants involved with our DIG and Nursery ministries. Compelled by God's justice and care for the most vulnerable and by a genuine love for our neighbor, we desire the total well-being of our children, *both* their spiritual maturity *and* their physical safety.

We pray that you find it a great joy to come alongside us in equipping the next generation to delight in God's glory and declare that glory to our neighbors and the nations.

Blessings in Christ,

Bret Rogers
Elder

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GOAL OF DIG CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

God's gracious and global purpose in Jesus Christ is to save rebellious sinners and transform them into true worshipers of his glory and grace. This saving activity finds its expression in the local church, a people among whom Jesus' lordship, the Spirit's ministry, and the gospel's power manifest themselves. *Delighting in God Children's Ministry* (DIG) is the way our congregation regularly unites with one another to serve the coming generations with the gospel and assist parents in ministering the gospel to their children.

Our goal in DIG is *to equip the next generation to delight in God's glory and declare that glory to our neighbors and the nations*. This goal highlights our joyful responsibility to teach the Lord's glorious deeds to the next generation, so that they hope in God and remain steadfast in their faithfulness to him (Ps 78:5-8). Moreover, it encourages us to depend on the Lord to sustain our gospel ministry to children, since he himself has an unwavering commitment to flood the earth with a knowledge of his glory through Jesus Christ (Hab 2:14; Rom 16:25-27).

Our heavenly Father makes our own participation in this ministry possible through the gospel of his Son (2 Tim 1:8-14). For this reason, we joyfully make a four-fold commitment to meeting and sustaining the stated goal.

1. **We impart biblical truth even to the very youngest of children by...**
 - A. Acquainting children with the whole of the Christian Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15-17).
 - B. Presenting the Bible as the revelation of the person and work of the triune God to deliver his people from darkness (1 Pet 1:23-25).
 - C. Encouraging children to develop a biblical mindset and Christian worldview (Rom 12:2).
 - D. Instilling in children strong and intentional desires to memorize Scripture (Ps 119:11).

2. **We emphasize a God-centered view of all things by...**
 - A. Guiding children to the only, triune God who owns the universe, created them, sustains their life, and governs all things (Acts 17:24-25).
 - B. Showing children that God is the central figure and main character in the Bible (Ps 78:4).

- C. Revealing to children God’s chief passion to do everything for his own glory and the praise of his name (Rom 11:36).
 - D. Teaching children that when all of the energies from their God-wrought passions are spent for Christ’s glory, they gain the greatest satisfaction and delight (Phil 3:7-8).
- 3. We encourage enduring faith in God through Jesus Christ by...**
- A. Leading children to recognize their sinful state, repent, and come to God by faith alone in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone (Rom 3:24-25).
 - B. Encouraging children to trust in the character and promises of God (Deut 7:9).
 - C. Cultivating a habit of interacting and responding in faith and obedience to the Word of God (Jas 1:22).
 - D. Nurturing in children a passionate pursuit of joy in God’s presence (Ps 16:11).
- 4. We lead children to participate gladly and actively in the local and global purposes of God by...**
- A. Helping children to see the hand of God at work in this world (Dan 2:20-21).
 - B. Spurring on the children to pray fervently to the God of the Bible (2 Thess 3:1).
 - C. Encouraging children to recognize and use their spiritual gifts for the good of the church and the world (1 Cor 15:58).
 - D. Stirring a passion in children to see God made supreme in the lives of family members, friends, neighbors, and all people groups (Matt 24:14).

These four dimensions of our commitment to equipping the children describe more than *what we do*; they remain characteristic of *who we are* as Christ’s body. By intentionally focusing on these things and practicing them before the children and their parents, each department team will demonstrate a culture of attentiveness to hearing God’s word and delighting in God above all else through Jesus Christ. In this way, Redeemer Church hopes to build into each child an unwavering passion to delight in God’s glory and declare that glory to our neighbors and the nations.

We believe the curriculum published by *Children Desiring God* (Minneapolis, MN) best bolsters the aims above. This curriculum largely shapes our children’s ministry philosophy and distinctives, which we provide in the following pages.

PHILOSOPHY & DISTINCTIVES OF DIG CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Partnership with Parents

We believe God has designed parents with the *primary* responsibility for the spiritual nurture of their children. The local church should not usurp or hinder the parents' role in raising their children in the instruction and admonition of the Lord. Rather, the church ministers *alongside* the parents, intentionally seeking ways to equip and sharpen the parents in discipling their children. The gospel ministry that occurs in DIG each week represents the corporate expression of what already takes place in our homes daily. Thus, we structure the curricula and design ministry roles that enable Christ-centered parenting to flourish both inside and outside the local gathering (see Deut 6:4-9, 20-25; Ps 78:5-6; Prov 1:8-9; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21).

Theological Depth

We believe God has designed children with the capabilities to both pursue and grasp the deep truths of Scripture. Our task in building these truths into their lives should begin even at a very young age. We commit ourselves not to hiding difficult doctrines and profound truths from them, but to explaining and clarifying for them the entire counsel of God. Our hope is that God will use this biblical foundation to transform their lives and shape their worldview, so that they will live in a manner that brings glory to God through Jesus Christ whether during times of great rejoicing or intense sorrow (see Deut 6:7; Ps 78:4; Acts 20:27-28; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 1:4; Col 1:27-28; 2 Tim 3:15).

God-Centered Emphasis

We believe that the Bible is God's written revelation for humanity. People come to know God personally in his Son through the abiding witness of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible's very nature, therefore, demands that we read it as a book first and foremost about *God*. We teach children to read the Bible this way by having them always answer the question "What does this story say about God?" We believe that the more children know God, the less they will see themselves as the center of the universe, and the more they will grow to embrace God's absolute sovereignty and enjoy living under his benevolent, Fatherly rule (see Ps 119; Luke 24:44; Col 1:16-17; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 12:28).

Intentional Application

We believe that faith comes through hearing the word of God. We also believe that teaching ultimately falls short if it *merely* feeds words and concepts into the minds of children without ever applying the truth to their hearts. We desire the children not only to know biblical truths, but also to be transformed by them, so that their lifestyle rightly reflects the power of the gospel. Therefore, we seek to explain God's truth through illustration—connecting the known to the unknown—and demonstration—relating the abstract to the concrete (see Deut 6:2; Pss 1:1-2; 119:1; Rom 10:17; Eph 4:1; Jam 2:14-26).

Team Taught

We believe God has equipped our local body with a diverse array of teachers and servants. He granted these gifts to individuals, in order that his people would be edified and equipped to do the work of the ministry. Each class has a Department Team Leader, Worship Leader, Small Group Leaders, Teachers, and Assistants. We encourage all servants to maintain their involvement even when they may not be the primary teacher for the week. Doing this provides the children with a variety of teaching styles, as well as numerous examples of adults seeking to live out the faith before them (see 1 Cor 12:1-14:36; Eph 4:7-16).

Fruitful Future

Many curricula written for children contain a repetition of the same Bible stories every year. As the children grow older, only the means by which the stories are told change. We, however, utilize a building block approach by which children learn new truths every year that build upon and deepen their understanding of what they learned previously in Scripture. We believe this format provides a broader understanding of the whole of Scripture and a more insightful understanding of God and his purposes in redemption.

TOWARD A BIBLICAL VISION FOR YOUR FAMILY

The fallen world, bent on exchanging the truth of God's glory for lies, has a deadly vision for your children, as does the prince of this world, Satan. A cosmic battle rages against you and the hearts and minds of all who were created to reflect God's glory. Still worse, we were all born with a heart that joins these rebel forces against God's perfect design for life. Even the vision we think is wise is foolish and ends in never-ending destruction under God's omnipotent wrath.

Our only hope to gain true, life-giving vision for our family comes with treasuring the person and work of Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel. Because of his death and resurrection, only Jesus is mighty to turn us and our children from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. In Christ, we find our dark bondage broken, our heinous sins forgiven, our rebellious hearts made completely new. In Christ, we even find new affections that compel us to forsake the world's values and embrace a God-entranced vision for all of life. God's word, the Bible, reveals that vision for all of Jesus' disciples.

As you consider developing a vision for your family on the Bible's own terms, please consider the following statements and questions:

1. **What you treasure most will determine how you live and lead your family** (Matt 6:21; 13:44; Luke 12:32-34). Does the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, shape what you value? How so? How do you see the gospel's aims and priorities shaping your family's aims and priorities? For example, if one aim of the gospel is to see countless people celebrating God for his great salvation with their whole life (Matt 28:18-20; Rev 5:9-10), how might your life-commitments contribute toward that end? How might that aim shape your child's education goals or prioritize what you long for as a family?
2. **Genuine love will show a deep affection for the ultimate good of another in God such that we spend ourselves to see them obtain it** (Mark 10:45; 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:31-33; 13:4-7; cf. 2 Cor 12:15). Jesus' love for sinners moved him to forgo his right to remain in glory and condemn us all with perfect justice that he might instead set glory aside, take the form of a servant, and lay down his life for us on the cross (Phil 2:1-11). Jesus pursued our ultimate good in God unto death; and, as 1 John 3:16 says, "by this we know love, *that he laid down*

his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” In what ways does this kind of love compel you to serve your wife’s, your husband’s, or your children’s ultimate good in God?

3. **What is of utmost importance for character is conformity to Christ** (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:24; 2 Pet 1:3-8). What character qualities do you long for your family members to possess? How do you pray for each other? Does Christ-like character inform your prayers? You might consider jotting these characteristics down on an index card as you encounter them in your Bible readings. Then turn them into prayers for your husband, wife, children, and church members.
4. **The present age—the period between Jesus’ resurrection and Second Coming—is passing away** (1 Cor 2:6; 7:31; 15:20-28; 1 John 2:17). How does eternity shape your attitudes toward life? Your possessions? Your children? Your job? Your giving? What changes do you need to make in your home to reflect this future perspective?
5. **Christ displays his lordship on earth through the visible expression of his body, the local church** (Matt 16:18-19; 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 12:27; Eph 1:20-21; 2:11-3:21). How does your schedule permit your family to participate faithfully in local church gatherings and ministries? How do your commitments demonstrate love for God’s people? Is the local church an indispensable part of your family’s devotion to Christ (Heb 10:24-25)?
6. **God prospers his mission through healthy church members and faithful local churches** (Rom 15:14-28; Phil 1:5, 14)? How do you intentionally pursue outreach to your neighbors and the nations together with your brothers and sisters at Redeemer? What is your family’s unique role in contributing to the work of the ministry? What ministries thrill you and your family? How might your family contribute to the growth and development of Redeemer’s mission?

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

FOR REDEEMER CHURCH

DIG Children's Ministry takes place during the “Discipleship Hour” on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 10:15 for ages 3 months to 12 years old. Our workers prepare to receive children after 9:00, allowing ample time for parents to participate in other ministries the church provides during that time. Parents are welcome to attend class with their child if they desire, especially when the child needs help during various stages of shyness, separation anxiety, etc. Please know that our workers make every effort to come alongside the parents, both granting and receiving wisdom in the process of childrearing, training, and discipleship.

Our *Nursery Ministry* (or “extended session”) occurs from 10:30 to 12:00 **only** for ages 3 months to 3 years old. Nursery workers receive children ages 3 months to 1 year old after DIG finishes at 10:15. Because we desire to see children grow to enjoy corporate worship with their parents, Nursery rooms for 2 and 3 year old children do not open until after dismissal from the corporate worship setting. Time for dismissal is printed in the worship guide and posted on the screen during worship.

We recognize that ministry to children involves more than caring for their spiritual well-being. The Scriptures indicate that gospel ministry is one that gives careful attention to a person's *spiritual* well-being as well as one that shows genuine interest in a person's *physical* well-being (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor 6:12-20; Jas 2:14-17). Whereas the pages above primarily emphasized ministry to children's spiritual needs, the emphasis in the following policies and procedures rests on ministry to their physical needs (safety, nourishment, hygiene, etc.). However, some policies—like classroom discipline—certainly include both aspects. Although nearly all of our policies apply to DIG and Nursery ministries alike, clarifications appear where they differ.

DIG Servant Approval & Identification

All servants who minister to children in DIG at Redeemer Church must meet and/or complete all the following requirements.

1. The servant must be at least eighteen years of age. Persons under eighteen years of age should attend the appropriate class offered during the Discipleship Hour.

2. The servant must be a member of Redeemer Church and have been in regular attendance for a minimum of six months.
3. The servant must complete the Application for Children’s Ministry recognized by Redeemer Church. Completed applications remain on file at Redeemer Church.
4. The servant must submit to a criminal background/reference check. Anyone convicted of child/sexual abuse or a related offense may not serve in DIG at Redeemer Church. Completed background/reference checks remain on file at Redeemer Church.
5. The servant must receive adequate training (see “Physical, Emotional, & Sexual Abuse” below) for children’s ministry at Redeemer Church and familiarize him/herself with the Policies and Procedures for children’s ministry at Redeemer Church.
6. The servant must receive approval by a qualified representative of Redeemer Church, including the elders or those individuals designated by the elders.
7. For identification purposes, we ask all servants to wear a DIG name badge while working with the children. This enables parents and members to identify whether the right people are caring for their children.

Nursery Ministry & Servants

The Nursery Ministry operates on a “receive-care-give-care” policy. This means that *we expect all mothers and fathers who place their children in the nursery to serve in the nursery at least twice per quarter*, except where such service could be harmful to the children or the church. This includes circumstances that make service impossible (e.g. severe injury or disability) or that make care for children unwise (e.g. certain past or current sinful or criminal behavior or temptations). If you believe you are unable to serve for any reason, please come to one of the elders or the Children’s Ministry leader so we can help care for you as you discern how to help care for children at Redeemer Church.

Our desire is to staff the nursery ministry with people who not only love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but also love others more than themselves and want to serve the children and each other in this unique way. Moreover, this policy provides a regular opportunity to

practice what the gospel teaches us in passages like Rom 12:13, Gal 6:2, and Phil 2:1-11.

Qualifications for Nursery Servants differ slightly from those serving in DIG (see “DIG Servant Approval & Identification” above) *only* in the following five ways. Membership and regular attendance for a minimum of six months, applications for children’s ministry, and background checks still apply for all serving in the Nursery Ministry.

1. A worker must be 10 years old if working with their parent in the 1 Year Olds room during Nursery and there must be at least one volunteer besides the parent who is qualified in accordance with points 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 under “DIG Servant Approval and Identification” (above). The 10 year old worker must only play with the children. They are not allowed to pick up children or change their diapers.
2. A worker must be 13 years old if working with their parent in the Infants or Crawlers rooms during Nursery and there must be at least one volunteer besides the parent who is qualified in accordance with points 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 under “DIG Servant Approval and Identification” (above). The worker is allowed to sit to hold babies, but not allowed to change diapers.
3. At 13 years old, volunteers can work in the 1 Year Olds room during Nursery without their parent present, providing they are with a minimum of two other qualified personnel in accordance with points 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 under “DIG Servant Approval and Identification” (above).
4. At 15 years old, volunteers can work in the Infants or Crawlers rooms without their parent, but in both cases, volunteers must work with a minimum of two other qualified personnel in accordance with points 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 under “DIG Servant Approval and Identification” (above).
5. When volunteering in the 2 or 3 Year Olds classes a worker who is 10 years through 17 years old must be with a minimum of two other qualified personnel in accordance with points 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 under “DIG Servant Approval and Identification” (above).

Responsibilities of Parents

We uphold the biblical conviction that God has designed parents with the *primary* responsibility for the physical nurture and spiritual oversight of their children. As parents agree to partner with us in gospel ministry to their children, we ask them to consider themselves responsible for the following:

1. If their child is participating in DIG for the first time, we ask that they fill out a “Child Registration Card.” The team will need access to this information for ministry purposes (letters, birthdays, etc.) and for contacting parents in case a need arises. If the child’s information has changed from previous years in DIG, then parents should fill out a new card.
2. A new sign-in sheet will be available each Sunday. Parents must make it a point to “sign-in” and “sign-out” their child. This policy stands for children ranging from ages 3 months to 12 years old. Age departments 3 months to 3 years old function on a dual-tag system. Parents must obtain a tag that corresponds with their child’s numbered tag, and return the tag upon their picking up him/her at the end of class time.
3. Parents must notify at least one DIG servant verbally and specify on the sign-in sheet whether their child has any food allergies or other health-related concerns that would aid the team in caring for him/her. Normal snacks include Cheerios, Cheez-it crackers, Animal crackers, Honey-Graham crackers, Goldfish crackers, and Pretzels.
4. If their child carries any loose items (cup, bag, etc.) into the classroom, then parents should label these items with their first and last name. For the younger ages, their bags will be placed in a cubby hole labeled with their respective pager/tag number. Labeling the items aids the servants when they may need to remove the items from the cubby holes during class time.
5. Parents should not allow their child into the classroom with any gum or hard candy. These may become choking hazards during the more energetic “Transition Activities.”
6. Parents should not allow their child to enter the classroom with small pocketknives and/or any other instrument that could be harmful or frighten others not used to being around them.

7. Parents are asked to read and abide by the Health and Wellness Policies of Redeemer Church as well as the Behavioral Principles and Guidelines for Children at Redeemer Church.
8. Parents are strongly encouraged to be prompt in picking up their children from DIG when the Discipleship Hour ends.
9. Parents are strongly encouraged to make their child's regular attendance to his class a habit. For younger aged children, this helps solve problems with separation anxiety. Most importantly, regular attendance keeps the children current with the lessons designed to build upon each other.

Class Placement of Children

Children three months through three years of age begin each new DIG year in the class that corresponds to their ages, advancing to next class up on their birthday. The one exception would be infants who have turned one year old, but are not yet walking.

Once a child reaches the three-year-old class, he or she no longer advances on the date of birth. Instead, children begin each new DIG year in the class that corresponds to their age as of September 1 and remain in that class for the entire year, similar to the standard practice of most public and private elementary schools.

Health/Well-Child Policy & Procedures

Redeemer Church has a "Well-Child" policy that we enforce for both DIG and Nursery ministries. We make it a point to inform all participating parents and servants of this policy. The policy is as follows:

- If your child is exhibiting any of the following symptoms and it is impossible to keep him home, please keep him with you at church. The classroom leaders of each age department are authorized to turn away ill children for the sake of other children and caregivers present.
- A child may not be admitted into the classroom if they have exhibited any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours, with or without medication: fever, runny nose (unless associated with allergies), cold symptoms, croup or severe coughing, sore throat, any unexplained rash, diarrhea, vomiting, eye infection, head lice,

symptoms of any childhood disease (chicken pox, measles, hand-foot-and-mouth, etc.), a cough plus any other symptom.

- If any of these symptoms arise while your child is in the nursery, you will be notified immediately and asked to keep your child with you for the remainder of the Discipleship Hour or worship service for Nursery/Extended Session.
- If a child in your family has a contagious illness, please consider keeping his/her siblings out of DIG and/or the Nursery for that week.
- Medication cannot be administered to children while they are under our care in DIG or Nursery.
- A child is welcome into the classroom with an open wound if it is covered immediately with a bandage to prevent any blood-borne diseases.
- If your child comes down with a contagious illness and was in the classroom just before or at the onset of the illness, please contact the Team Leader(s), and let him/her know. In this case, they can then inform other parents whose children may have been exposed.

This “Well-child” policy exists for the protection of the children entrusted to our care during the Discipleship Hour. We regret that this policy sometimes means not admitting children that have been brought to our public gatherings.

Sanitation, Hygiene, & Safety

The very nature of childhood behavior can create an environment that has the potential to spread infection or bring about harm. Several practices are in place to ensure the classrooms are clean and safe for the children.

- We spray/wipe down all handled toys with Clorox® Anywhere Disinfectant Spray. Only toys that can be easily cleaned are accepted into the classrooms.
- We disinfect all changing table surfaces with Clorox® Anywhere Disinfectant Spray and use antibacterial hand sanitizer between *every* diaper change. Non-latex gloves are available at each changing station for soiled diapers, and should be disposed of after *every* diaper change.

- Food crumbs, craft scraps, glue remnants, etc. should be cleaned up before turning over the classrooms to the Nursery workers. Nursery workers are expected to do the same when “extended session” ends and should empty the contents of their trashcan(s) in the church dumpster.
- Crib sheets are used by one child only and should be placed in the “dirty” laundry following each child’s use of them. Sheets and other used linens are washed on a weekly basis.
- All classrooms are vacuumed and mopped on a weekly basis. Those serving in classrooms with tables and chairs (ages 2-7) should remember to organize the rooms in a way that makes this cleaning process easier for the janitorial staff during the week (e.g., stack chairs on tables or in the room corners).
- Those serving in DIG and/or Nursery ministries should regularly survey the classroom for safety hazards and health concerns. DIG teams will fill out a Classroom Safety & Supplies Checklists annually for each room. This includes checking electrical outlet covers, broken furniture, etc.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedures

DIG takes place during the Discipleship Hour on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 10:15 for ages 3 months to 12 years old. All department teams should prepare to receive children after 9:00, allowing ample time for parents to participate in other ministries the church provides.

DIG functions with an “open” policy, so that parents have access to their children at all times. Parents are welcome to attend class with their child if they desire, especially when the child needs help during various stages of shyness, separation anxiety, etc. We only ask that parents be mindful of the disruption their presence may cause upon entering the classroom to check on their child. Parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children’s ministry will be required to complete the application and screening process (see DIG Servant Approval & Identification above).

Check-In Procedure

Classrooms that host children ages 3 months to 3 years old function on a “dual-tag” system that uses cell phones to contact parents. The following procedure should take place with every child:

1. When parents drop off their child, a DIG servant should give the parent a numbered “Parent” tag and clip the respective “Child” tag on their child’s clothing.
2. Parents must sign-in next to their child’s name on the provided sign-in sheet, record in the designated column the tag number assigned to their child, and ensure that DIG servants have their cell phone number recorded. Directories are available in each classroom.
3. If a parent needs to be contacted during DIG, servants will look up the parent’s cell phone number in a directory made available in each classroom and contact them using their own or another’s cell phone. Also, someone serving in a “floater” position is normally available for assistance if another phone is needed.

Two options for contact are available for parents: calling and/or text messaging. A parent’s preferred way to be contacted will be specified in the directory. **For a call**, parents will remain alert for any phone call. They will not answer the call in class or in the worship service. Instead, they will simply be mindful that if their child is in the nursery and their cell-phone vibrates (perhaps with an unknown number), then more than likely their child needs assistance. **For a text message**, servants will use their own or another’s cell phone (which has a text plan) in order to contact the parent. A simple message like “Luke needs your assistance in nursery” or “Luke needs a change of clothes” will be enough for the parent to respond.

4. At check-in, DIG servants should give attention to any special instructions the child’s parent may have and should place the child’s belongings in the cubbyhole that has the same number as the child’s tag.

Classrooms that host children ages 4 to 12 years old do not use the dual-tag system, but only a sign-in sheet. Parents must sign in next to their child’s name on the provided sign-in sheet and record any special instructions concerning their child. A DIG servant should be present to

welcome the child and obtain any pertinent instructions from his/her parent(s).

Check-Out Procedure

For classrooms that host children ages 3 months to 2 years old the following procedure should take place with every child:

1. When parents arrive to pick up their child, a DIG servant must obtain the “Parent” tag from the parent and verify that the “Parent” tag number accords with the “Child” tag number. If an individual asks for a child and does not have the correct “Parent” tag that matches the “Child” tag, especially if he/she is not the child’s parent, we will keep the child until further verification can take place and the correct tag provided.
2. Upon verification, the tag may be removed from the child, and the child returned to the parent along with the child’s belongings from the correct cubbyhole.
3. Parents must sign out their child on the sign-in sheet. At this point, DIG servants may interact with the parents about the lesson and provide them with any “take-home” sheets, etc.

For classrooms that host children ages 4 to 12 years old, parents must sign out next to their child’s name on the provided sign-in sheet. If possible, a DIG servant should brief the parents on the child’s lesson, his/her progress, or other pertinent issues. “Take-home” sheets should also be handed out at this time.

Though these check-in procedures require extra time, each child’s safety and well-being is our first priority.

General Classroom Safety

Under no circumstances may a child be left in a classroom or anywhere unattended. Staff members and DIG servants are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or a DIG servant finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or servant will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others (e.g., if a child is the last to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where

other servants are present). Parents must stay with their child until at least two approved DIG servants are present in the classroom.

Food Policy

Although “meals” will not be fed to the children even if they are packed, we will gladly give clearly labeled, prepared bottles or cups to the children (milk, juice, water, etc.). Parents who leave formula or milk for their child should also provide written instructions in the designated space on the sign-in sheet.

Snacks will be given to all children unless the parents indicate otherwise on the sign-in sheets. Parents must notify at least one DIG servant verbally and specify on the sign-in sheet whether their child has any food allergies or other health-related concerns that would aid the team in caring for him/her. Normal snacks include Cheerios, Cheez-it crackers, Animal crackers, Honey-Graham crackers, Goldfish crackers, and Pretzels.

Only parents are allowed to give medicine to their child. Parents are not allowed to put medicine of any kind in bottles that will be given to their child by DIG servants.

Restroom & Diaper Policy

Infants & Toddlers

Because younger children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and DIG/Nursery servants will observe the following policies:

Diapering

1. Only female nursery workers or the child’s parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
2. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
3. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
4. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery/classroom will be recorded on the sign-in sheet.
5. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash”).
6. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

7. Cloth diapers are allowed but must have a protective cover over them. Nursery workers must be notified when a child is wearing a cloth diaper; and if the diaper becomes soiled, the parent will be contacted to come and take care of it.

Toilet Training (2 – 4 years of age)

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
3. Only the individual, children's restrooms located on the first floor of the education building, across from the 3-4s classroom will be used.
4. When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open and the DIG or nursery worker will maintain a line of site with another adult in the classroom.
5. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
6. Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with DIG or Nursery servants. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery/classroom will be recorded on the sign-in sheet ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded—ask her if she needs to go").
7. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
8. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Parents are expected to furnish extra clothing for their child in the case of an "accident."

Older Children (5 – 11 years of age)

Older children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance *when needed*. However, children should receive the *minimum* amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members or DIG servants should never escort a child to the restroom alone, but should be accompanied by another approved servant.

If a staff member or DIG servant must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should ensure that another approved servant is accompanying him/her. He/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when

entering the bathroom area and try to assist verbally 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 staff member or approved servant.

Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or DIG/Nursery servants to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of four, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

Behavioral Principles & Guidelines

Three Convictions

There are at least three convictions that have motivated the development of these Behavioral Principles & Guidelines.

1. We are a church family and it is important for certain boundaries to be in place for the sake of the “family.” Stewardship of church property, the safety of others, and the safety of our children are at stake.
2. Children who are submissive, well-disciplined, and under control honor the Lord, honor their parents, and are a positive reflection of the church’s ministry to our neighbors. If this is true, then the opposite is also true. Unruly children dishonor the Lord, dishonor their parents, and are a negative reflection upon the church (Prov 29:15; Rom 1:30; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20; 1 Tim 3:4-5).
3. Discipline is an important part of nurturing faith in our children. To follow Jesus is to obey him and submit to his authority. Cultivating an obedient spirit in our children and teaching them to yield to God-given authorities in their lives helps to prepare their hearts to obey Christ and to bend their wills to his. Thus, discipline has an instructive and restorative nature to it and should be used towards these ends.

Four Guiding Principles

1. Although it is possible to control the outward actions of a child and produce a desired behavior, the goal of our ministry to young people

is to direct their hearts toward God and cultivate a spirit that is responsive to him. The gospel teaches us that true obedience and discipline flow from a renewed *heart* that is responsive to the Lord (Luke 6:43-45; Gal 5:22-23). It is not merely the conformity to an external set of rules. Therefore, if we are concerned about the behavior of our children, the most important thing that parents and servants can do is to seek God's help in nurturing hearts of faith out of which acts of righteousness will flow.

2. We will maintain high standards for behavior at Redeemer Church, but we are also committed to being fair and realistic about our expectations of children. If a child only had six hours of sleep the night before, we should not be surprised if he has difficulty sitting still in church. If a preschooler is expected to sit quietly for a two-hour service, we are probably expecting too much. If there are 45 minutes of unstructured time between a social event and a worship service, we should not be surprised if children get into mischief. We will do our best to consider children and their limits and try to accommodate their needs as much as possible.
3. Parents are ultimately responsible for the behavior of their children (Deut 6:7-9; Eph 6:4). We will expect parents to keep their children under control during public gatherings and to make sure that their children are under adult supervision while they are in the building. When under the supervision of a children's ministry servant at Redeemer Church, that servant will be expected to maintain order and appropriate behavior of the children in his/her care. If a child is not responsive to any of the permissible forms of classroom discipline (see below), the child will be taken to his/her parents.
4. The raising of children is also a community responsibility (Rom 16:13; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Pet 4:10). As a church family, we gladly stand with parents and are eager to do all we can to support and encourage them in their parenting responsibilities. We consider it a serious responsibility to teach the full counsel of God and inspire children in faith, love, and righteousness. Some children will struggle with behavior problems more than others. We want to be eager to pray, strategize and work with parents to find solutions.

Expectations of Children at Redeemer Church

Although the behavioral boundaries vary depending on the age of the child, the activity they are involved in, and where that activity takes place, most rules will fall under one of three basic expectations we have for the children.

1. Respect for the Lord (i.e., God is king.)

Our ultimate expectation is that the children honor the Lord. He created them to live for his glory and demands joyful submission to his word. Requiring obedience to the Lord's will—even while a child may still be unregenerate—provides repeated opportunities to confront them with the reality of God's kingship, the meaning of sin in relation to God, the nature of their depravity, and their need for inward transformation through the gospel. This first expectation includes (but is not limited to) respect for all people, appropriate stewardship of all church property and equipment, mindfulness of class time, and willingness to learn and obey.

2. Respect for Adults (i.e., God established authority structures in his created order.)

We expect the children of Redeemer Church to honor the adults in the church with respectful speech and submissive behavior. We consider sassiness or defying the instruction or correction of an adult to be disrespectful and unacceptable. However, children must also understand that the authority adults have is *limited*. God alone is to be obeyed absolutely. If an adult abuses his/her authority or makes demands beyond his/her sphere of authority, the child must *not* obey, but try their best to get help from proper authorities (e.g., another ministry leader, pastor).

3. Respect for All People (i.e., God made all people in his image.)

We will endeavor to provide a physically, emotionally and spiritually safe environment for every child involved at Redeemer Church. Children will be encouraged to think before they speak and find encouraging things to say to others. Mean, crude, or hurtful speech or actions toward others are unacceptable. Each child should recognize the same for themselves. We will encourage children not to act in ways that will put their bodies or their faith at risk.

Classroom Discipline & Correction

We encourage immediate and consistent response to negative behavior before it escalates into a serious problem. If the child's parents are present we will expect them to correct their children when they misbehave. We also encourage other adults not to ignore a behavior problem when they see it. Parents should not be offended or insulted if someone else addresses their child's misbehavior.

When the children act contrary to the above expectations, the following course of action will be taken:

1. With clarity and gentleness, the servant will identify and explain to the child how his/her behavior was inappropriate and then offer instruction regarding the correct way to conduct him/herself. The child may then be allowed to return to the regular activities.
 - Treat this time for discipline as an opportunity to minister the *gospel* to the child's heart. Use the gospel to clarify why their behavior was wrong, to encourage repentance and reconciliation where necessary, and to exhort them in pursuing righteousness by faith in Christ.
 - When the child returns to the regular activities, make this transition easier for them by helping them back to their seat, protecting them from potential mockery, or encouraging them in good behavior. Walk or stand beside the child for a season as a reminder. With younger children, redirect the child to a new activity, giving the child options that aid their pursuit of what is good.
 - Discern whether the child's actions are worth reporting to his/her parents following class time. If the child repeats the same misbehavior on a weekly basis, this may be helpful for his/her the parents to know.
2. If the child persists in misbehaving, he/she may be denied a privilege or isolated from main group activities. This will sometimes require securing help from the classroom Assistant(s). As in the first course of action, the servant should identify and explain to the child how his/her behavior was inappropriate and then offer instruction regarding the correct way to conduct him or herself.
 - If the child's behavior leads to this second course of action, the Team Leader(s) should confidentially share the situation with the child's parents when class is over. Make sure you honor the child

and encourage the parents at the same time. Parents should address their child in a suitable location that will not distract others, provoke the child to wrath, or humiliate him/her before others.

- If a “time-out” is enforced for the child, use discretion based on his/her age and maturity level. For example, a two-year old should not be expected to sit in time-out for ten minutes.
3. If the above steps do not correct the behavior, the child should be taken to his/her parents or those directly responsible for him/her.
 - At least two approved servants must accompany the child to his/her parents. One servant must be prepared to explain the situation in a manner that is honorable to the child and helpful for the parents.
 - If the child is three-months to three-years old, servants should have the parents called/texted to come pick up their child. If the child is four-years to twelve-years old, servants will accompany the child to his/her parents.

Limitations

No child in DIG will be subject to any form of corporal punishment by a servant who is not the child’s parent or legal guardian. Corporal punishment includes, but is not limited to, rough handling, ear pulling, pinching, slapping, or spanking. It is our conviction that parents are the appropriate persons to employ corporal punishment when needed, and this is best carried out privately. Any physical form of correction is considered unacceptable in the classroom or any other group setting.

No child in DIG will be subjected to emotional abuse. This includes, but is not limited to, name-calling, shaming, threatening, humiliation, or yelling.

No child in DIG will be subjected to physical restraint unless restraint is necessary to protect others from harm. Do not touch a child for disciplinary purposes unless it is necessary to restrain the child to protect others. If a servant is guilty or accused of inappropriate action toward a child, he or she may be subject to discipline by the church and/or removal from the children’s ministry. Furthermore, he/she may be subject to criminal and/or civil assault charges under the laws of the state of Texas.

Guidelines for Classroom Management

We strive to provide the children with a classroom environment that helps them obey Christ and focus on his word. We do not want a dull and distracting class-time that makes it is easier for children to rebel. Some guidelines that will promote the former appear as follows:

- Pray for God to grant wisdom with the time. Pray the children have submissive hearts and a willingness to learn about the Savior.
- Structure the class time beforehand, so that it is conducive to a calm, quiet, and ordered atmosphere. Be consistent throughout the year.
- Organize the classroom to prevent problems (e.g. cover toys during lesson time; put crafts away until the appropriate time, etc.).
- Prepare as if you were teaching the lesson and anticipate any problems *before* they arise.
- Establish your authority, let the children know your expectations, make and enforce rules, and follow through with instructions you give.
- Affirm positive behavior, letting the children make choices when possible. Make ‘troublemakers’ into helpers.
- Make activities interesting, fun, and appropriate for the age level. Move quickly from one activity to the next during class time.
- Know your children and be *actively* involved with them throughout the time you have with them.

Physical, Emotional, & Sexual Abuse

Responsibilities

As a church, we are stewards of the children God brings into our lives; and being the most vulnerable among us, we must do what we can to provide utmost care for them (Deut 10:18; 24:17; Ps 10:18; 82:3-4; Isa 1:17; Matt 18:5-6; Jas 1:27). Moreover, we must submit to the apostolic command to trust God and be generally subject to the governing authorities he establishes (Rom 13:1-7). That means we are responsible to comply with the laws of the State of Texas and the law enforcement officials in our community, including Child Protective Services (CPS), for the well-being of our children.

Reporting

Should DIG/Nursery servants observe inappropriate behavior (e.g., policy violations or poor supervision or role-modeling), it is their responsibility to report their observations to the Children’s Ministry Leadership, the Nursery Coordinator, or an elder of Redeemer Church.

Should DIG/Nursery servants have “cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect,” the Texas Family Code *requires an immediate report* to:

- (1) any local or state law enforcement agency;
- (2) the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS); or
- (3) the state agency that operates, licenses, certifies, or registers the facility in which the alleged abuse or neglect occurred.

TEX. FAM. CODE §261.101(a) and 261.103. A report may be made to the DFPS Abuse Hotline by phone at 1-800-252-5400 or online at www.txabusehotline.org.

DIG/Nursery servants should also *report suspected child abuse or neglect to the elders of Redeemer Church* to allow for appropriate ministry to all parties.

If child abuse or neglect is suspected, **DO NOT** discuss the matter with parents, other DIG/Nursery servants, or any other members or guests (except as specifically set forth above). At all times during this process, confidentiality will be upheld to the extent necessary to allow for appropriate ministry and to avoid gossip and unnecessary knowledge of sin or untoward circumstances.

Further Instruction and Training

Once committing to serve parents and children in this ministry, DIG/Nursery servants must also receive more specific training on sexual abuse awareness through Ministry Safe’s online video training and corresponding quiz. When leadership *and servants* have an awareness of the basic characteristics of sexual abusers, as well as the grooming process utilized by molesters, they are better equipped to recognize and prevent abuse. For more information, visit www.ministrysafe.com.

For more information regarding child abuse and neglect at federal and state levels, visit www.childwelfare.gov and www.dfps.state.tx.us.

Digital Photographs & Social Media Policy

Increasingly, online mediums can be used to locate and track a person's whereabouts using nothing more than a posted photograph, whether by viewing a time, date, and location stamp imbedded in the photograph, or by simply looking for physical markers in the background of the picture. As DIG workers, we are not only concerned for the real-time safety of the children in our care, but also for the privacy and future safety of those children when they are not in our care. Many families have privacy and security concerns we are not always aware of, especially if it is a new or visiting family whose background and family circumstances are unknown to us. Some families are just uncomfortable with the privacy of their children not being up to their discretion. It is our responsibility to both protect the security of our children and respect the desires of their parents.

Therefore, it is the policy of Redeemer Church that all childcare servants refrain from taking and posting any digital photographs of the children in our care to any online or social medium such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Photographs of children may be taken for the production of hard-copy photographs to be used in the class room, but all digital copies should be deleted once the physical photograph is produced. Additionally, digital photographs may be taken if requested by a parent, but the photograph should contain the image of only that parent's child and be deleted once the photograph is shared with the parent.

Emergency Action Plan

First Aid

Although we strive to maintain the safest environment possible, children's activities can occasionally lead to accidents. In the case of an accident, each classroom has its own First Aid Kit that is accessible per the discretion of the children's ministry servants. Accident Reports will be kept in each classroom and must be filled out when a servant administers care to a child. A copy of a completed Accident Report should be made by hand or copy machine. One copy will remain on file at the church and the other copy will be given to the parents when they pick up their child.

It is the policy of Redeemer Church to first notify the child's parents in the event of a medical incident. In the event that the parents are not immediately available, children's ministry servants will administer appropriate treatment measures such as applying pressure or a bandage to a bleeding wound. No pharmacological treatment (oral or topical) will be

administered. Life-threatening situations will be handled as emergencies with appropriate treatment measures being immediately instituted. 911 and the child's parents will be notified immediately. Redeemer Church will not be responsible for any "Good Samaritan" assistance offered by any of its members.

Fire

In the event of a fire, remain calm, count all children in the classroom, and lead the children out of the room in a quick and orderly fashion. Children ages 3-23 months and 6-12 years are evacuated to the courtyard area between the Education Building and Worship Center. Children ages 2-5 years are evacuated to the south parking lot parallel to the Education Building.

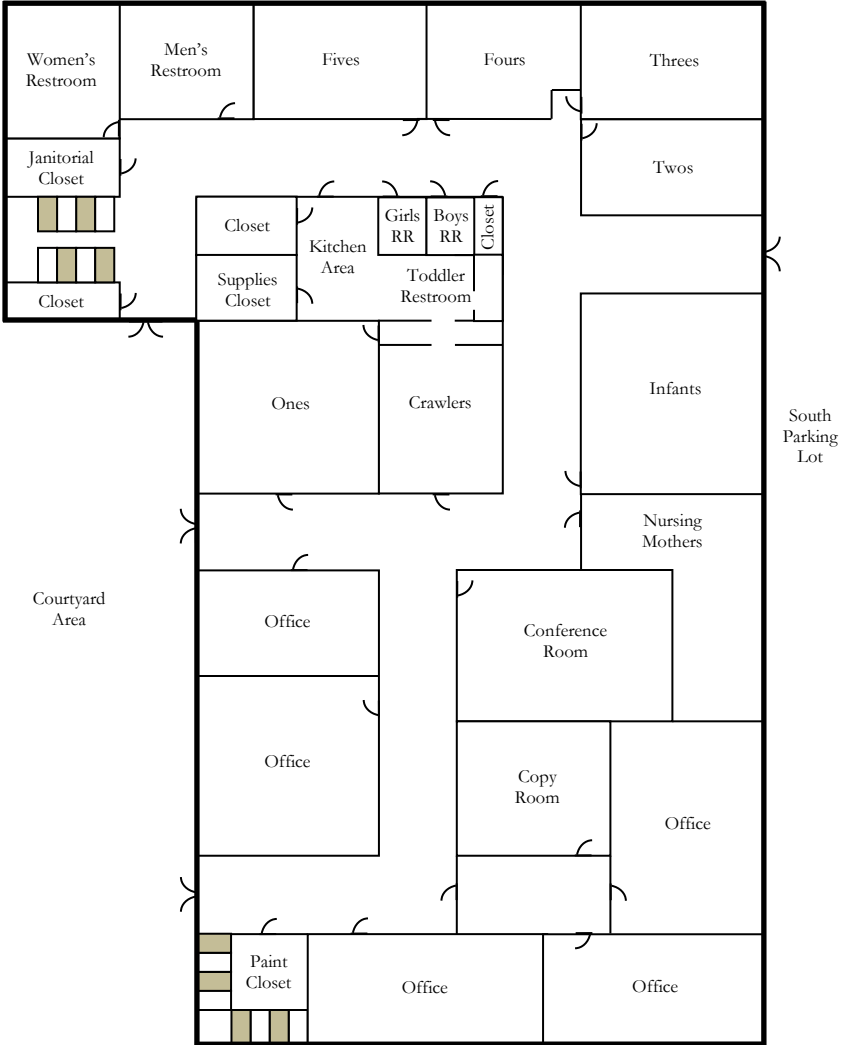
The Team Leader(s) will direct the evacuation of the children and should be mindful of the following evacuation plan:

- Check the class sign-in sheet and count the number of children present before leaving the room. The sign-in sheet should be kept with the Team Leader(s) as everyone exits the building.
- Direct the ministry team to gather the children in an organized fashion, leading them out as a group.
- Appoint one DIG servant as the last person to leave the classroom, having them shut the door on the way out.
- After exiting the building and reaching the designated location, check the sign-in sheet to ensure that all children are in attendance and safe.
- Parents will meet their children at the designated locations.

Tornadoes, Storms, Severe Weather

Children will be calmly escorted to an enclosed part of the building, such as an inside hallway or the lowest section of the building. They will be taught how to sit with their back against the wall, knees tucked under their chins, arms wrapped around knees, and heads bent down. All children will be accounted for and efforts will be made to calm and entertain the children.

DOWNSTAIRS FLOOR PLAN



Updated June 29, 2017