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INTRODUCTION

The objectives of SGBC's children's ministry are to teach the children under our care to know and love the Lord, and to minister to parents by regularly communicating with them about their children's progress and behavior. This important work is guided by our Philosophy of Ministry in obedience to the Scriptures and is carried out by our children's ministry servants under the direction of the Elders.

Meeting these objectives requires us to organize our ministry around five core principles. The purpose of this manual is to explain the practical rules and procedures that are derived from these principles, and to act as a reference for servants as they minister to the children. All servants in children's ministry *must know and observe* these principles and should inform the Director of Children's Ministry or an Elder if they can no longer fulfill or abide by them.

We should be clear that establishing specific rules and procedures is not what makes a ministry fruitful. Our ministries operate in a fallen world, and we must contend with all manner of sin, immaturity, and weakness. Thoughtful ministry organization and training can assist us in accounting for and managing these frailties, avoiding the difficulties these frailties can create, and also help us find our way back to our core principles when things begin to go wrong. This approach is especially important when ministering to children.

To you, the willing servants of SGBC's children's ministry, we praise and thank God for you! We hope that this manual is helpful to you as you labor to serve the Lord. May God richly bless your ministry, and may He grant you the wonderful privilege of seeing the fruit of your labor in the months and years to come.

FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES OF MINISTRY

1. **EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY** - Every servant is encouraged to fully prepare themselves for their assigned responsibilities, and continually work for increasing expressions of excellence in all of their service. In practice, this means diligent study and preparation for all lessons and activities, and knowing and abiding by the church's established rules, policies, and procedures.
"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."
(Colossians 3.23-24)
2. **SOUND TEACHING AND PRACTICE** - The leadership of SGBC carefully selects our children's curricula to ensure that it is faithful in all ways to the truth of God's Word. Ministry servants should also strive to ensure that all their teaching and conduct before the children is biblical.
"But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." (Titus 2.1)
3. **PROPER HEART / SPIRITUAL CONDITION FOR SERVICE** - Effective ministry is rooted in good character and motivated by love for the Lord and love for others. Therefore, it is important that servants are in the regular practice of prayerfully preparing their hearts for ministry, continually seeing to their own spiritual growth, and guarding their hearts from sin.
"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51.10)
4. **THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CHILDREN** - SGBC has a moral and legal responsibility to protect the children under our care. Protecting children includes taking precautions to ensure that they are not abused. If a servant suspects that the safety of a child has been compromised, it is imperative that they communicate this immediately to the Director of Children's Ministry (David MacNevin).
"Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" (Matthew 19.13-14)
5. **PROTECTION OF MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS AND THE CHURCH** - SGBC also has a responsibility to protect our servants. There are times when the words or actions of a servant may be misunderstood or called into question, and accusations of sin are wrongly made or insinuated. To protect both the servant and the church, SGBC has established procedures that provide accountability so that servants always have witnesses to their activities with children. These procedures must be followed at all times.
"Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgement as the noonday." (Psalm 37.5-6)

SPECIFIC GOALS OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

1. To teach the children under our care to know and love the Lord, and to equip them to minister the truth to themselves and their peers.
2. To provide a structure that meets children's physical, developmental, and spiritual needs, and to assure parents that their children are a vital part of our church body and are safe when in the care of our servants.
3. To prepare children progressively to sit under teaching as active listeners, able to understand and remember the truth they hear.
4. To minister to parents as they bring their children to church by regularly communicating with them about their children's progress and behavior.

SPECIFIC GOALS & BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Children's ministry is organized to provide children with the structure they need to grow in maturity, with the aim of preparing them to eventually sit under adult-level teaching as active listeners. Even before children enter our youngest class, they are being prepared in nursery for the classroom by being taught how to sit quietly and listen to stories being read, how to demonstrate self-control in action and word, and how to listen and obey their leaders. Below are skills that all children should be developing during their time in each class.

1. Basic classroom manners: children should be able to...
 - a. Sit in a quiet and physically self-controlled manner while they listen to the lesson
 - b. Demonstrate self-control and kindness in their interactions with other children (keeping their bodies to themselves, not being a distraction to their neighbors during teaching time - intentionally or unintentionally, being kind and courteous in their words and actions)
2. Knowledge of the Scriptures: children should be able to...
 - a. Open the Bible and find specific passages
 - b. Understand basic biblical truth, including the character and attributes of God, and the Gospel
3. Active listening: children should be able to...
 - a. Pay attention to their teacher - not be overly distracted by their neighbors, classroom environment, etc.
 - b. Remember what they've learned - demonstrated by an ability to answer review questions

PREPARING TO SERVE

All servants, regardless of the ministry they labor in, should be preparing their heart for service throughout the week by regularly reading and meditating on Scriptures (*Psalms 19.7-11*), and striving to grow in holiness (*1 Peter 1.14-16*). Teachers and helpers alike should also be regularly praying - for the children they minister to and their families, for the Word of God to be clearly communicated, and for God to be glorified before the children.

Teachers are provided with the Generations of Grace curriculum to teach through. GoG has shared an incredibly helpful document that biblically walks through the process of preparing a lesson using their curriculum. This document will also be a helpful resource to those preparing to teach in Kids4Truth and VBS.

- The entirety of the Generations of Grace curricula and schedule, including "How to Prepare a Lesson in GoG" can be found at <https://www.sgbcvenice.org/childrens-ministry-resources> - password is sgbckids (no capitals)
- The webpage above also contains several helpful resources for teachers and helpers. Included are videos by Jill Wragg, Linda Bailey, and Robin Clapp on classroom discipline, personal preparation for teaching, and teaching methods. (Note: some policies referenced in "Establishing Discipline in the Classroom" are outdated. Please abide by the current Child Protection Policies in the case of differing policies.)

- There is a “student journal” linked: this is a wonderful resource that gives children space to take notes on Sunday morning, and review the lesson through the week. Teachers are encouraged to share this resource with parents.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES:

- Children may not be admitted to their Sunday school room until 2 children’s ministry servants are present. If a servant is running late, the other servant should ask another children’s ministry servant to be present in the classroom until the other servant arrives (*see list of approved substitutes to know who can be asked*).
- Child safety during check-in / check-out is crucial. At the check-in station, children are given a name-tag with an ID number that matches a security tag given to their parents for check-out. When a parent comes to pick up their child, servants *must* check the security tag and the name-tag to verify that the numbers match and the child has been checked out. A security tag that has been “checked out” will have one cross-shaped punch for first hour (Children's Church and nursery), or two for second hour (Sunday School and nursery). Visitors will be given a hand-written name tag with the names of the adult and child, and a numbered security tag.
 - Children must wait in a self-controlled manner while servants speak to parents and verify security tags. Parents are not permitted to call their children out, but must give their security tag to the servant and wait for the servant to call out their child. It may be necessary to periodically remind parents of SGBC’s check out procedures in a gracious manner.
 - *In the case that a parent does not have their check-in tag and their child is upset and needing to go to them urgently, the parent needs to provide their driver’s license so the servant can check their name and verify that they are the adult who checked in that child. In the case that the parent name on the name tag is not the parent trying to pick up the child, the servant will get a check-in iPad and search the child’s name. If the parent’s name is listed in the child’s family profile, they may pick up their child.*
 - Only approved adults (whose name is on the child’s name tag or whose name is saved in the child’s family profile) may pick up a child. Youth-age siblings may pick up a sibling if they have the security tag.
- Bathroom breaks: children are expected to be quiet and self-controlled in the hallway. No groups of children should be allowed to use the restroom between 10:00 - 10:45 due to crowding in the hallways. Children can go to the restroom unaccompanied only if they are in 4th grade or above. All other children must be accompanied by a servant who will remain outside the door and wait for them.
- In the 3-5yo room, snack should be given before craft time as many crafts contain glue, to avoid children eating snacks with glue on their hands. Children can be taken to the bathroom in groups during the craft and coloring time.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Arrive on time (8:45 for Children's Church; 10:30 for Sunday School)
- Know the classroom schedule and take responsibility for ensuring it is followed (primarily applicable to 3-5yo class)
- Set expectations for classroom behavior at the beginning of each class: children should know the class rules and the consequences for breaking them
- Prepare and teach lesson
- Delegate specifically to helpers: especially with the 3-5yo class, teachers must be active in delegating tasks to helpers so they can keep track of time
- Print any coloring / review / activity sheets (please use the Check In Area printer in the foyer of the Children's Wing)
- Prepare any crafts / special activities
- Ensure that the classroom is returned to order after lesson; includes keeping the closet organized
- If unable to serve, teachers are responsible for finding a substitute and informing the children's ministry administrator, Sarah Masella, in addition to informing their class helper(s) (*see appendix for approved substitute list*)

HELPER RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Arrive on time (8:45 for Children's Church; 10:30 for Sunday School)
- Greet students and parents upon arrival
- Remind parents to take children to the restroom prior to dropping them off
- Monitor behavior, especially during teaching time: this will often mean paying more attention to the children than the teacher
- Hold children to a high standard of obedience, disciplining when necessary (see discipline policy) and encouraging them in their obedience (it is often helpful in older classes to be able to take notes to remember what to communicate with parents - consider making a chart where helpers can notate specific instances of discipline or praise reports per child)
- Provide children with snacks and water (*only applicable to 3-5yo class*) (NOTE: Some children who attend SGBC have severe allergies. Most snacks selected are allergen-friendly, but servants *must* check the child's name tag for disclosed allergies before providing snack for the child's safety.)
- Take children to the restroom
- Speak to parents as they pick up their children and give feedback on their child's behavior and participation; parents should be informed of all "strikes" a child receives (Appendix: *If / Then Behavior Chart* for more detailed information regarding the three strike rule)
- Ensure that classroom is returned to order after lesson - includes keeping the closet organized
- If unable to serve, helpers are responsible for finding a substitute and informing the children's ministry administrator, in addition to informing the teacher they serve alongside (*see appendix for approved substitute list*)

CLASSROOM RULES:

- No child should speak without first raising their hand
- No child should use rude, unkind, or demeaning speech

Note: These rules are specific "classroom rules" to allow for an orderly learning environment, and children are frequently reminded of them. Other guidelines based on biblical principles exist and should be enforced (see *Discipline Policy* for more).

TRAINING INFORMATION & GUIDELINES

Servants are provided with initial and periodic trainings, the goal of which is to equip, encourage, and exhort all those serving in children's ministry. These trainings will be comprised of the rules and policies covered in this manual, and specific instruction and advice for teachers (some instruction listed below). There will also be opportunities for new and seasoned volunteers to ask questions, discuss various methods, and converse with leadership and experienced children's ministry servants.

Guidelines for Sunday School / Children's Church - ages 3-5

- Keep the main truth the focus, and use lots of repetition
- Simplify the lesson by using short, clear sentences and language easily understood by young children; teach using biblical terminology in GoG with confidence - define terms when necessary using simple language
- Consider helping children engage with lesson by using visual aids such as puppet and felt board (both located in closet of Room 8)
- Helpers should be active in monitoring behavior, positively redirecting and correcting misbehavior
- Plan crafts ahead of time, prepping and testing them at home so they can be modified as needed

Guidelines for Sunday School - Grades 1-3 / 4-6

- Use biblically precise language when teaching, and give definitions where needed - children should grow in biblical literacy as they progress through classes
- Encourage children to bring their Bible to class and actively follow along, looking up passages and reading
- Engage children during teaching with the understanding that children learn differently (visual, auditory, reading / writing, kinesthetic)
- Monitor children's engagement during lesson - if the teacher can tell that children are becoming disengaged, they should attempt to catch the child's attention in a positive manner (asking questions of the class, using dramatic voice inflection, etc.)
- Remember that this should be an enjoyable environment - servants should work to make learning biblical truth fun and engaging, and give grace when children misbehave without lowering the standard of behavior
- Give children a specific bathroom break immediately following lesson (this also gives them an opportunity to get up, move around, and stretch)

Note: The teaching time from the 3-5yo age group is generally under 20 minutes, while the teaching time in the grades 1-3 class is often closer to 45. Give grace to children as they transition up, encouraging them in positive behavior and gently correcting misbehavior. It is important that servants have realistic expectations of the children's behavior and offer corrections with grace and gentleness.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Children are expected to obey their leaders and treat them and their classmates with kindness and respect. When servants must correct a child, the goal should not merely be modification of external behavior, but to identify and address the heart problem. When possible, servants should engage with children: asking questions, addressing their behavior, and using specific, biblical language to correct. (See *If / Then Behavior Chart* for more detailed instruction on classroom corrections.)

Three Strike Policy:

After being given three strikes in any area of disobedience or defiance, the servant must contact the parent to have the child removed from class. Children should be informed when they are given a strike so they understand the consequences of continued disobedience. Strikes are given for direct disobedience or unruliness. Not all behaviors which require correction will necessitate a strike! If disruptions, general fidgeting, being easily distracted, or minor misbehaviors are *not a pattern* of behavior for the child, servants are encouraged to use discretion but it *likely* does not necessitate a strike. With young children, interruptions happen often. Teachers should use discernment to know if it is a *pattern* in a child and they need the accountability, or if it is something that would be easier overlooked. Sometimes simply moving a child can help solve a problem or distraction.

Speaking to Parents:

It is a grace to parents when leaders in children's ministry bring problems to their attention and give them an opportunity to shepherd their children. Servants should regularly and graciously communicate to parents their children's behavior and participation in class, offering encouragement with the feedback. One of the ways to biblically love these children is to identify and correct words, actions, and attitudes that violate God's Word, and give parents the opportunity to address those issues at home.

In the case of a visiting family bringing their child to Sunday School, servants should not immediately offer parents critical feedback of their child's behavior except in extreme circumstances (in which the Director of Children's Ministry, David MacNevin, should be immediately involved). If the family returns and begins attending regularly, children's ministry servants should communicate with parents regularly about their child's behavior and participation.

Specific Discipline Guidelines:

1. Violence in word or action means *immediate* return to parents. Children who have demonstrated violence should be removed from the vicinity of other children for their safety, but should remain in the classroom in order to abide by the Child Protection Policies.
2. Children must respect and follow the directions of all leaders. Defiance and consistently ignoring a leader's instruction is not tolerated. Lower-level behavioral issues should not be allowed to continue, and servants must inform parents so these behaviors can be addressed at home.
3. Children must practice patience, kindness, and self-control towards other children and leaders.
4. Children must keep their hands, feet, and bodies to themselves.

General Guidelines:

- It is important to set clear expectations with children by repeating classroom rules often.
- Children should understand that classroom rules are established to help them learn biblical truth and are derived from biblical principles. Talking out of turn, distracting others, willfully defying leaders, etc. all prevent them and their classmates from learning and are expressions of a lack of love towards their teacher and classmates.
- Servants must be gentle and gracious whenever correcting a child; they should also be realistic in their expectations of the children, keeping in mind their age, maturity level, personality, etc., without lowering the standard of behavior.
- Help children to redirect behavior with "put off / put on." Give children a godly alternative to the behavior for which they are being corrected.

Children's Ministry Behavioral Chart: If / Then Discipline Scenarios	
If the child is struggling to keep their hands, feet, or body to themselves...	• Verbal reminder: "Hands/feet/body to ourselves" • If the child continues to touch others, helpers should create distance between them and the other child: if playing on floor, by asking them to sit in a different area; if sitting at table, by moving their chair or changing seats
If the child is grabbing toys/ crayons/etc away from others...	• Verbal correction: "Do not take toys away - that is selfish and unloving! If you take toys away again, you will have to sit with me." • Help the child to biblically walk through the situation: return toy, ask for forgiveness • If the child continues to take toys from others, helper should have child sit with them for reading / coloring / quiet play for several minutes. Remind child again of verbal correction, and help child to redirect when returning to play time ("If you would like a toy like that, let's go to the toy bins and find something similar - I'll help you")
If the child is intentionally distracting others during the lesson...	• Quietly get child's attention and briefly correct: "Pay attention, do not distract others" • If child continues to intentionally distract others, helper should reseat child in the back of the room near them • Consider strategically seating children who struggle in this area in an easy-to-reach seat, so they may be corrected or resealed without disruption. • Remind the child: "It is <i>unloving</i> to distract others from learning. You are preventing others from being able to obey."
If the child is unintentionally distracting others during the lesson...	• Quietly get child's attention and briefly correct. Give specific correction as to how they are being distracting (i.e. "Keep your body still") • If child continues to be distracting, helper may need to move child to sit in the back of the room • Gently remind the child: "It is <i>unloving</i> to distract others from learning. When you do [behavior], you are preventing others from being able to obey." • <i>Consider: some children have more struggle with sitting still, especially for extended periods of time, without demonstrating willful rebellion. Give grace in correction, but without relaxing the standard.</i>
If the child is interrupting the lesson verbally, not raising their hand to speak...	• Helper should tap the child on the shoulder and quietly remind them to raise their hand • If the child continues to interrupt, helper should reseat child in the back of the room near them and quietly remind them of rules ("You are not allowed to talk while the teacher is talking. This is so you and your classmates can learn. To interrupt the teacher is unloving - both to the teacher and your classmates. You must show love and respect by being quiet and listening.")
If the child is easily distracted...	• Helper should quietly get child's attention and give verbal reminder: "Pay attention to the teacher" • <i>Consider: Some children appear disengaged while actually listening intently. Avoid over-correcting things like wandering eyes, body language, posture, etc. Teachers should routinely ask questions to encourage children to pay close attention.</i>
If the child is being intentionally rude to others...	• Verbal correction: "Do not tear down your classmates, that is unloving. Your speech should always be helpful, loving, and gentle, not rude or mean. Instead of saying [xxx], use your words to build up and encourage." • If the child continues to be rude or demeaning, remind them of verbal correction and the consequences for continued disobedience. Inform parents at check-out of the child's struggle to use kind, edifying speech and their response to correction.
If the child is defiant, unwilling to obey in any area...	• Give firm, verbal correction and explain the biblical reason for the rule • Remind child: "Your parents have put you in this class to learn. When you disobey in this way, you are not learning and you are being <i>disrespectful and unloving</i> to your teacher. You must stop [behavior] and begin [positive behavior]." • If child continues to be defiant or unruly, helper must immediately text parents so child can be removed from class

CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

For volunteer and child protection

1. Servants are never to use corporal punishment or force. If a child is extremely unruly and disobedient, the parent must be immediately called.
2. Volunteers are not to act as a child's "friend" in a children's friendship manner. Volunteers must always maintain their authority status and act accordingly. While friendliness is encouraged, children must view their leaders as authority figures and not be inappropriately close (i.e. sitting on laps, hugging / wanting to be held, etc.).
3. Children must always be under the supervision of Children's Ministry servants. There must never be a situation in which children are left unsupervised. (*The only exception to this rule is for bathroom breaks: children in the oldest Sunday school class may use the restroom unattended.*)
4. Each class must have at least two adults present. If only one adult is present, the servant should find another children's ministry servant who can remain in the class until the scheduled servant arrives (*see list of approved substitutes*). This principle extends to all circumstances, including bathroom breaks, activity / game times, etc. If there is an occasion in which a child needs to be removed from the class, move the child to sit near the back of class and contact parents immediately. Do not remove child from classroom - all servants must abide by Child Protection Policies and avoid being alone with a child in hallway.
5. When taking children to the restroom, there should always be two volunteers present with the children. Volunteers can check to see if a Bulwark servant is in the hallway - if they are, one volunteer from class can go and the Bulwark servant can serve as the "second person." Children can go unattended if they are in 4th grade and above. Younger children must be accompanied by a volunteer who will wait outside the door, or near the classroom door if within line of sight of the restroom. Volunteers should check to ensure bathroom is empty, then allow the child to go in. Volunteers should never be alone with a child in the bathroom with the door closed! If the child needs help, prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as you help the child.
6. Men should not take children to the restroom *unless* the class's female servant is unable.
7. Avoid assisting a child over the age of four who has wet or soiled their clothes. Instruct them on how to clean themselves without your direct assistance. If this is not possible, contact the parent.
8. Avoid helping young children with their zipper or pants / skirt. There are large T-shirts available in the closet of Room 7 that can be used to conceal wardrobe malfunctions.
9. Volunteers must be guarded in physically interacting with children - no sitting on laps, etc.. Remain above reproach in everything.
10. Any suspicions of abuse (either an incident at church or suspected parental abuse) must be reported to the Director of Children's Ministries (David MacNevin) or any Elder.
11. For minor injuries (scrapes, bumps, etc.), volunteers can provide first aid as appropriate and notify parents at pick-up.
12. Volunteers need to file an incident report if an accidental injury occurs that requires immediate attention and notification of a parent, or that results in bleeding, bruising, knot, or visible mark that remains more than a few minutes. An incident report must be filed if an injury occurs that results in the child needing professional medical attention. Incident reports can be found in every classroom.

Note: There will be a Bulwark Ministry servant monitoring the hallway during both services. These servants are sometimes required to leave the hallway. Children's ministry volunteers must not remove children from the classroom under the assumption that the Bulwark servant will be a "second person" or witness to them speaking to a child in the hallway.

APPENDIX

LIST OF APPROVED SUBSTITUTES:

If a servant is unable to serve, they should check Planning Center to first attempt to switch a week with the next scheduled servant. If the next scheduled servant is unable to switch, they must find an approved substitute (*see list below or view “Team” on Planning Center app to see other approved teachers / helpers, or utilize “Sunday Morning Children’s Ministries” thread on the church app*). They must clearly communicate expectations with their substitute (arrival time, classroom responsibilities, etc.). After finding a replacement, they must inform the Children’s Ministry Administrator so the Planning Center schedule can be properly updated, as well as the other servants in their classroom. Teachers for Kids4Truth are encouraged to switch weeks with another teacher rather than finding a substitute.

Teachers (Age 3-5, Children's Church and Sunday School):

- Ben Bridge - 509-309-6049 // benjaminbridge14@gmail.com
- Kelsey Bridge - 941-271-1445 // kipears@gmail.com

Teachers (Grades 1-6, Sunday School):

- Sarah Masella - 941-408-4894 // sarahm@sgbc.me
- Linda Bailey - 941-586-7026 // lindabailey5151@gmail.com
- Tabitha Kurakin - 941-276-6049 // tabithakurakin@gmail.com

Helpers (Age 3-5, Children's Church and Sunday School):

- **See list of teachers above*
- Tucker Masella - 941-716-9619 // tuckermas15@gmail.com
- Sarah Wragg - 941-499-4848 // wraglet1@gmail.com

Helpers: (Grades 1-6, Sunday School):

- **See list of teachers above*
- Tucker Masella - 941-716-9619 // tuckermas15@gmail.com
- Gina Antonyuk - 360-448-1738 // g.antonyuk4@gmail.com
- Sarah Wragg - 941-499-4848 // wraglet1@gmail.com

Note: If a servant has exhausted the list above and cannot find a substitute, they are to contact Sarah Masella or David MacNevin.

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Ministry Leaders & Administrator:

- Elder over Children's Ministries - Colin Jordan - colinj@savinggracebiblechurch.org
- Director of Children's Ministry - David MacNevin - davidm@sgbc.me
- Children's Ministry Administrator - Sarah Masella - sarahm@sgbc.me
- Nursery Coordinator - Catherine Kwekel - catherinek@savinggracebiblechurch.org

Sunday Morning Children's Ministry:

9.00am		10.45am	
AGE	CLASS	AGE	CLASS
0-2yo	Nursery	0-2yo	Nursery
3-5yo	Children's Church	3yo-Kindergarten	Sunday School
		Grades 1-3	Sunday School
		Grades 4-6	Sunday School

TRANSITIONING TO NEXT CLASS:

Nursery to Children's Church / Sunday School:

For a child to move from nursery to Children's Church / Sunday School, they must be:

- 3 years old
- Fully toilet trained
- Verbal
- Able to reasonably follow instruction without parents present

Children will transition out of nursery into Children's Church / Sunday School immediately following their third birthday.

Children's Church:

Once children turn 6, they can immediately sit with parents in service or adult Sunday School.

Sunday School:

Children ONLY move to the next Sunday School class on "Move-Up Sunday" - the third Sunday in August. The only exception to this rule is children transitioning out of nursery into the 3-5yo class - 3yo children may join the youngest class immediately following their birthday, provided they meet the conditions listed above. Any exceptions to the move-up policy must be approved by leadership.

Below are the requirements for children to move up to the next Sunday School class.

- 3-5yo → Grades 1-3:
 - Child must have completed kindergarten*
- Grades 1-3 → Grades 4-6:
 - Child must have completed third grade
- Grades 4-6 → Youth Group
 - Child must have completed sixth grade AND be a minimum of 12yo

**6yos will remain in the 3-5yo Sunday School until they complete kindergarten.*

KIDS4TRUTH (WEDNESDAY EVENING CHILDREN’S MINISTRY):

Ministry Leaders:

- Kids4Truth Coordinator - Sarah Masella - sarahm@sgbc.me
- Kids4Truth “MC” - Greg Smith - gregsmithdc@Hotmail.com

Classes and Age / Grade Requirements:

- Discoverers (“Green Shirts”) - 4-5yo
 - Children must be four by September 1
- Developers (“Red Shirts”) - Grades 1-2
 - Children must have completed kindergarten
- Detectives (“Yellow Shirts”) - Grades 3-4
 - Children must have completed second grade
- Defenders (“Blue Shirts”) - Grades 5-6
 - Children must have completed fourth grade

Kids4Truth is structured around the school year and breaks for summer. Once children complete the higher grade level of their K4T class, they will move up to the next class at the beginning of the next Kids4Truth / school year.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SERVANT APPLICATION AND TRAINING PROCESS

Servants in children's ministry must:

- Be an adult member of SGBC
- Have been regularly attending SGBC for at least 6 months
- Have completed the ministry application process
- Have successfully completed the background check
- Have completed the necessary training for their ministry responsibilities

Note: Youth ages 12 and up may only serve in children's ministry on a case-by-case basis. To best shepherd the children in our care, servants should be able to biblically identify and correct problems - this is best done by adults. Any youth considered for service in children's ministry must be the child of members, be regularly attending SGBC, must submit a youth ministry application, and undergo an interview process with David MacNevin, the Director of Children's Ministry.

Application Process:

1. **Ministry Application:** Volunteers must complete the *Ministry Application for Leaders and Volunteers* form and submit it to the Director of Children's Ministry, Children's Ministry Administrator, or Kids4Truth Administrator. They will provide the volunteer with a copy of the Children's Ministry Manual to review prior to an interview with the Director of Children's Ministry.
2. **Interview:** After completing the ministry application and reading through the manual, the volunteer will have a brief interview with the Director of Children's Ministry that will include the following:
 - Review of the completed ministry application
 - Review and signing of the *Policy for Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse* form
 - Review and signing of the *Rules for Volunteers and Staff Working with Children Under the Age of 18* form
3. **Background Check:** A background check authorization form is included in the ministry application. Each applicant will need to turn that in to the appropriate leadership. They will then be sent a direct link by email to fill out to complete the background check online. The Elders are the only ones who see results of any given background check. If any criminal offenses are revealed on the background check, the Elders will decide what is and is not a disqualifying offense. Generally, convictions involving children and/or offenses regarding violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, or any immoral conduct would preclude someone from serving in children's ministry. Failure to disclose a conviction during the application process is also a disqualifying event. Successful completion of the background check completes the application process.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TRAINING:

Upon completing the application process, the volunteer will be required to attend planned trainings so that they are fully equipped to serve. The training will be facilitated by the appropriate leader, and will include familiarization with the curriculum and classroom guidelines, a review of the volunteer's area of responsibility, and all rules and policies covered in the Children's Ministry Manual. The volunteer may also be required to observe seasoned volunteers as part of the training process. All children's ministry volunteers will be expected to attend periodic "refresher" trainings and informational meetings.

See Children's Ministry Manual for specific information covered in training.

ACCIDENT / INJURY MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING GUIDELINES:

- For minor injuries (scrapes, bruises, bumps, etc.), volunteers will provide first aid as appropriate and notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury when the child is picked up from class. First aid kit is located in the closet between restrooms in the children's wing.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond basic first aid, the child's parents will be summoned immediately in addition to the Director of Children's Ministry. If circumstances warrant, an ambulance will be called.
- An incident report must be filed with the Director of Children's Ministry if:
 - An accidental injury occurred that resulted in a child needing professional medical attention
 - A child was injured due to the actions of another child, and the injured child needed medical attention
 - There is ANY suspected abuse

Note: All incident reports will be filed AFTER the emergency has been handled.

SICKNESS POLICY:

Children should not be dropped off in children's ministry if they are exhibiting the following symptoms:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the past 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of infectious diseases

If a volunteer observes a child exhibiting any of these symptoms, they will separate the child from other children and ask the parent via text to pick up the child.

Medications:

Volunteers are not to administer prescription or non-prescription medication to children in their care. The only exceptions to this policy are in life-threatening situations (asthma attack, severe allergic reaction, etc.).

For Servants:

If a servant is sick or if any in their household is positive for Covid, they must find a substitute and remain home.

HOW TO HANDLE AN ALLEGATION:

Should an allegation of abuse or neglect arise, the situation will be handled according to biblical principles by church leadership. Volunteers are responsible for reporting any suspected abuse to the Director of Children's Ministry so that the necessary steps can be taken.

1. Make sure all class rosters (electronically accounted during check-in) are complete and accurately reflect all children and volunteers in the room. Any incidents (biting, accidents, injuries, fights, etc.) should be recorded on incident reports.
2. Volunteers must report all incidents to the Director of Children's Ministry who in turn will report the incident to SGBC leadership. Leadership will investigate if necessary and make a decision as to the next step(s). The Elders will follow the guidelines of Scripture (Matthew 18) and our bylaws.
3. If an actual allegation of abuse or neglect against a child under the age of 18 is made, the Elders will notify the parents and the person accused, and will also notify the civil authorities, per state law. The accused will be asked to temporarily step down from their duties pending an investigation. In addition, the Elders will complete an incident report and SGBC's insurance company will be notified. All documents relating the incident / allegations will be forwarded to the insurance company.
4. Upon any substantiated allegation against a volunteer, the volunteer will immediately step down from the position, and the Elders will take all necessary steps outlined in Scripture and the bylaws to resolve the matter.
5. If the media should want to question church members regarding an incident or allegation, the Elders will choose one of their own or a designee to be the spokesperson for the church. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. Pastoral counseling can be arranged for those who desire it.