

Children's Ministry
Parent Handbook





Welcome!

Welcome to Children's Ministry at Grace Community Church. Our staff and volunteers are privileged to serve you and your children. Children's Ministry is "All about Jesus: beginning to end"-- from young to old, from Genesis to Revelation. It is our desire to partner with you to show each child this Good News.

This handbook is designed for you to get to know Children's Ministry better, so we can work together as a team. Childhood is the age when the heart is tender and ready for the seeds of truth and grace to be planted. We are purposeful in each classroom to nurture and teach these truths in an age appropriate manner. Weekly student papers or student stickers (for younger children) are also purposeful to offer you some tools or conversation starters for spiritual teaching in your home.

We are excited about the plans God has for each child, as we work together to love them and teach them in Jesus' name.

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Philosophy of Ministry

Gospel Perspective

Children's Ministry serves our children in the context of the local body of Christ – understanding that our children are not “the future church,” but a critical and unique part of our community of faith now. Loving our children well means we not only care for them, but for families, teachers, and volunteers in the context of integrated and loving relationships. We believe each unique relationship is, therefore, a foundation for Gospel discipleship: pointing one another to Jesus, growing in God's grace, responding in love for God and others, and developing a sense of belonging in the greater community. We also understand a more focused relationship with parents -- to love, support, and equip them in their God-given responsibility of spiritual training.

Gospel Practice

In each classroom, activity or event, we seek to create a place of love and safety. We desire to develop relationships – children, parents, teachers, and volunteers -- nurtured in the Gospel, empowering love to flow from one to another. We see our service as far more than just baby-sitting; we have the opportunity to demonstrate service motivated from a heart of worship and gratitude, not from moralism or duty. In addition to modeling the love of Jesus to our children, we also desire to serve the Body by freeing parents to worship, supporting other ministries through childcare, and responding to the needs of our community through individual and collective works of mercy and service.

- We desire to support and come alongside parents, encouraging and inviting them to be actively involved in their children's classes as part of the smaller community.
- We believe God creates each child with unique and special gifts and we seek to help them identify and develop these gifts to encourage, teach, and serve the church.
- Sanctification is a process, therefore we seek to share the Gospel through caring and age-appropriate means.
- We value the safety of our children and volunteers by defining and enforcing classroom size limits.
- Because we value families and their time together, we purposefully limit the number of programs we offer. We also encourage children to participate in the worship service with their parents.

Please Partner With Us...

We miss you when you're not here!

Perhaps more dreaded than the Saturday night fever is the Sunday morning plague! Satan has a way of timing this to interfere with worship and spiritual growth. We can take the offense instead of defense by planning ahead.

- Think ahead: lay out clothes, prepare an easy breakfast, etc. for Sunday morning
- Pray for focus and calm for your family
- Go to bed early on Saturday night!

Consider Serving the Families and Children of Grace

Over 300 children are loved, cared for, and taught by over 200 volunteers at Grace. Many serve once a month; others serve each week. Many teach, many help, and some are available as a substitute when there is a need. Opportunities are available, Sunday morning, or Wednesday evening. Please call the CM office (891-2006, ext. 133). Church membership is not required but we do ask that you fill out a CM application, agree to a criminal background check, and meet with CM staff for training.

"Snack Closet" Donations

During each class, the children are offered a snack and juice. If you are able to help stock our snack closet, we'd appreciate your donations. We prefer 100% sugarless juice and snack items that require no preparation such as Ritz crackers, cheese cubes, goldfish crackers, and pretzels.

Pray-Pray-Pray

- That the children would grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus.
- That we will always be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in all that we do.
- That God will make us sensitive to the needs of the families.
- That God will give us unity as a Children's Ministry team.
- That God will call people forward to serve in this ministry.

Security...

To ensure the safety of each child in our care, certain precautions are taken.

- All volunteers and teachers in CM must be a regular attender at Grace for six months and go through an application/screening process that includes a background check.
 - First time visitors are asked to register at the Welcome Table.
 - Once a child has registered, parents sign their children in and out of class. Children birth through 2nd grade are given ID number tags with corresponding parent numbers. If a parent is needed during the service, that number will appear on either side of the auditorium on the number board. If your child's number appears, please go to your child's room. These number ID tags are also required to pick up a child from the classroom. The tag must be given to the teacher before a child is released from class.
 - Only approved staff are permitted in the classrooms unless a parent is needed.
 - We require a minimum of two volunteers in each classroom at all times.
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Move Up Sunday...

Children are assigned to classes each fall based on the child's age as of August 30. It is our desire to provide what is best for each child through age appropriate materials and curriculum. It is also our desire to keep children with the peer group they will enter school with, building relationships with one another and with their teachers.

Inclement Weather

In the event of incelement weather, check Grace's website at www.graceinfo.org for service cancellations. When the 9:15 Sunday service is cancelled, there will be no childcare for the 11:00 service, if it is held.

Sickness Guidelines

Most parents are quick to realize if their children are really sick, but what about those gray areas? Are they coming down with something? Shouldn't the contagious period be over by now? What about mild symptoms? Here is a quick reference guide to aid in those last minute judgment calls. Let's be conscientious about having a healthy program for all the children.

Symptom	Recommendation
Cold	Basic rule: if discharge is clear, child is safe. However, children that may need mouth or nose wiped frequently can be demanding on the volunteers, so please use discretion
Fever	A child who has had any fever on Saturday, should not come on Sunday morning. Twenty-four hours free of fever are needed to be considered free of infection.
Sore Throat	Unless accompanied with other symptoms (such as fever), consider safe and simply judge by how the child feels.
Ear Infection	Not considered infectious in itself, but the cold that sets it up is, so go by those symptoms.
Eye Discharge	If discharge is wiped away, and new discharge returns, there is probably an underlying infection, and should be considered contagious.
Antibiotic	Child is no longer contagious after twenty-four hours on antibiotics and fever free.
Diarrhea	More than two abnormally loose stools in a single day should be considered infectious and given a 24 hour waiting period.

Butterflies (infants)

Care for infants is provided during all services (Sun/Wed). We ask that you bring a diaper bag marked with your child's name that includes 1-2 bottles, diapers, and a change of clothes all marked with your child's name. Toys that are handled in this classroom are sanitized on a weekly basis.

A maximum for Butterflies has been set in order to ensure the safety and care of each child. If your child is a steady walker, and independent with finger food such as Cheerios, we encourage you to place your child in the Squirrel (toddler) room.

Room 135 is our baby overflow room with video feed from the service for parents with little ones.



Squirrels (toddlers)

Care for toddlers is provided at all services (Sun/Wed). We ask that you bring a diaper bag marked with your child's name that includes 1-2 sippy cups, diapers, and a change of clothes all marked with your child's name. Toys that are mouthed in this classroom are sanitized on a weekly basis.

Bears (2 year olds)

Interactive Bible lessons are introduced in the 2-year old class on Sundays and Wednesdays. Children learn the same story/lesson for a month with hands-on materials, activities and crafts. We ask that you mark your child's name on any item brought to class. We also ask that you bring a coat when needed; children go outside every week. Toys that are mouthed in this classroom are sanitized on a weekly basis. A healthy snack is provided during each service.

Many 2 year olds have separation issues. You know your child best, but in most cases it is best to drop your child off at the door. Reassure him or her that you will be back and to have a fun time. In most cases, the tears or screams do not last after a parent has gone. If a child does not settle or if we need you for any reason, your child's ID number will appear on the side wall of the auditorium.

Bluebirds (3 year olds)

3-year olds learn a different Bible story each week, focused around a quarterly theme. Simple Bible memory is also introduced at this age. We ask that you bring your child's coat when needed; children go outside every week. We also ask that your child leave toys at home; they are easily lost/broken and tend to bring more problems than joy! Toys that need to be sanitized (mouthed, sneezed on, etc.) are done on a weekly basis. If your child has an allergy or special concerns, please note this on the sign-in sheet and also let the teacher know. A healthy snack is provided for each class.



Lions (4 year olds)

4-year olds have a weekly Bible lesson based on the "Jesus Storybook Bible" and learn a simple Bible memory verse each month. We ask that you bring your child's coat when needed; children go outside every week. We also ask that your child leave toys at home; they are easily lost/broken and tend to bring more problems than joy! Toys that need sanitized (mouthed, sneezed on, etc) are done on a weekly basis. If your child has an allergy or special concerns, please note this on the sign-in sheet and also let the teacher know. A healthy snack is provided during each service.



Kindergarten

Kindergarten age classes are offered at all services (Sun/Wed). Sunday 9:15 class uses Great Commission Publications (PCA) curriculum. Sunday 11:00 class is combined with PreK children and learn a weekly Bible lesson based on the "Jesus Storybook Bible." In addition to the Bible lesson, children experience crafts/activities to bring the lesson to life, snack time, and outdoor play.

Elementary (1st–5th grades)

Classes for Elementary age children are offered on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings at Grace. Check the bulletin or website for more detailed information. Curriculum (starting at age 2) used is Great Commission Publications (PCA), Gospel Light, and the Jesus Storybook Bible. During the summer we use the Workshop Rotation Model, which is like VBS on Sundays. Children rotate between classrooms each week (typically Bible, art, games).

Wednesdays

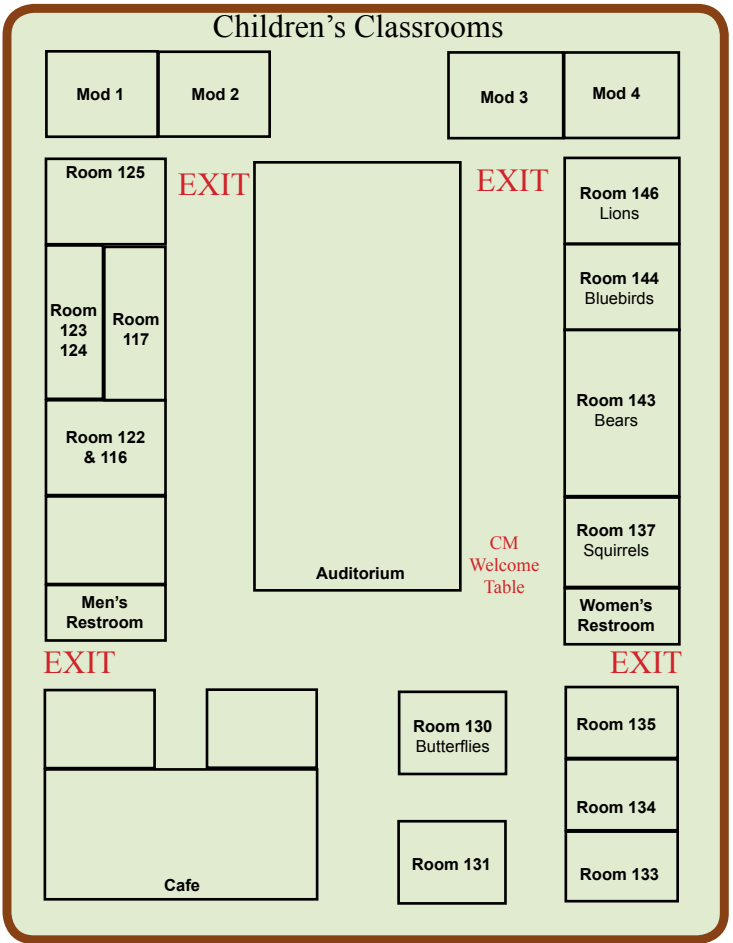
Classes for all ages are offered on Wednesday evenings that include a lesson, prayer time, activities and/or craft. Because class sizes tend to be smaller, this is a wonderful time to dig deeper into spiritual truths in the context of relationship. Elementary classes also spend time exploring their God-given gifts and interests through mini skill classes (art, dance, drama, games, etc) that are offered from time to time.

Summer Art Camp

Rising 3rd-8th graders from Grace and the community are invited to attend Art Camp. Camp is held each summer during the week following July 4. Students are taught by qualified art teachers and discover how they are creative, made in the image of God. On Friday of art camp week, a reception is held for families and friends to enjoy the artwork displayed from camp.



Children's Classrooms



GRACE

Grace Children's Ministry

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 Children's Ministry office:
 828-891-2006 ext. 133