



First Presbyterian Children's Ministry

Vision: to foster within each child the desire to discover God in a personal way, leaving an eternal impact of God's love on his or her life.



Introduction

We are here to:

- **provide loving care, Biblical teaching, prayer, support, fellowship and opportunities for spiritual growth to parents and their children from birth through 5th grade.**
- **weave the thread of spiritual growth into the child's world.**
- **supplement the family and its primary role as cultivator in a child's development.**
- **demonstrate to children of all ages that a relationship with Jesus Christ is an essential part of even a very young person's life.**
- **to prepare children to discover God's mission for their lives.**

To all of our Children's Ministry Families, both old and new:

Welcome! Thank you for entrusting your child to our care. In the Bible, God says, "Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). We believe this whole-heartedly.

Our ministry strives to do much more than just provide childcare to these precious little ones. We believe it is possible to share the love of Christ with a child from the day of his or her birth. We want to partner with you in teaching your child about God's amazing love, world, plan, and His Son, Jesus.

The purpose of this handbook is to introduce our staff, our ministry philosophy, programming, policies, and expectations. We pray that as you read this handbook it will be obvious that our goal is to glorify God. We will do this by working to instill the Word of God and a relationship with Jesus in the hearts and minds of children through loving, age-appropriate methods.

Please know that we consider it an honor and privilege to serve and support all of the families in our ministry. If we can help your family in any way, please let us know. We would love to meet with you and answer any questions you may have about our curriculum, our policies or just to sit and pray and get to know each other better.

Blessings,

Tina Jones, Karen King, Evelyn Penkert & Heather Tomlinson

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Philosophy

First Presbyterian Children's Ministry recognizes what a privilege it is to share God's love with the children of First Pres and their families. We strive to make Children's Ministry at First Presbyterian Church a place where our parents feel good about leaving their children. We understand that since you are entrusting your precious children with us we need to make the following commitments to you, our families.

We commit to teaching the Bible, God's Holy Word, in age appropriate ways.

The Bible says "Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." Psalm 119:105

We believe that these are the years that are most critical for reaching our children and hiding God's word in their hearts and minds.

We do this by:

- teaching Bible truths using a variety of engaging and age appropriate methods.
- setting realistic expectations for our children,
- teaching Bible concepts and encouraging children to memorize Bible verses,
- using worship, small group/large group times, and
- communicating with parents.

We commit to equipping and encouraging parents as the primary faith leaders in the lives of their children.

The Bible says "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Deuteronomy 6:5-7

We believe God intends for parents and primary caregivers to be the main faith leaders in their children's lives.

We do this by:

- praying for our families,
- providing resources to help parents,
- offering family friendly events,
- offering parenting events and special speakers, and
- equipping parents to serve in Children's Ministry.

Philosophy

We commit to prepare volunteers to serve God through our ministry.

The Bible says “So we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.” 1 Thessalonians 2:8

We believe serving God by sharing His love and word with our children is both a privilege and a responsibility.

We do this by:

- having a growing relationship with Jesus and accepting our role as spiritual leaders and role models for children,
- attending professional development opportunities, reading books and articles, and keeping up with current trends in ministry,
- giving our volunteers training through various methods including conferences, web casts, articles, shadowing opportunities, and
- providing all curriculum, resources and supplies.

We commit to providing a clean, safe and loving environment for all our children.

The Bible says “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23-24

We believe a child’s perception of church, God and followers of Christ are determined by his earliest experiences at church.

We do this by:

- providing and maintaining a clean and safe area,
- having age-appropriate supplies and toys in each room.
- providing background checks and training for all volunteers and staff. Maintaining proper ratios in each room, having at least 2 team members at all times, and
- striving for consistency in each of our classrooms, especially with the preschoolers.

Philosophy

We commit to offering opportunities for families to connect, fellowship and experience spiritual growth within a community of faith.

The Bible says “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

We believe God uses a community of faith to help families grow in their relationships with Jesus, family members and friends.

We do this by:

- providing opportunities for families to fellowship, and
- connecting families who can mentor and support one another through specific life stages and/or issues (Infertility, miscarriages, pregnancy, blended families, special needs, terminal illnesses, developmental or emotional issues).

We commit to glorifying God and sharing His love through missions and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19-20

We believe God calls all Christians, young and old, to share the gospel and to extend grace and care to all people.

We do this by:

- offering service opportunities for children and their families through VBS, and family missions, both local and away,
- providing resources for mission projects, and
- teaching our children that they can tell others the good news of Jesus and how much He loves them, anywhere and anytime.

Check In/Pickup Procedure

There are three different check-in locations:

*At the nursery suite entrance

*Across from the nursery suite and

*At the ground floor of the Children's Wing (shared lobby with First Presbyterian Academy)

Upon arrival, proceed to any of the above stations. Each kiosk should have a check-in attendant who can assist if needed. If you are new or just visiting, the check-in attendant will enter your information into the computer (which may take a few minutes). If your family is already in the system, enter the last 4 digits of your phone number and your family information should appear on the screen. Select the children that are with you and follow the prompts in red.

Labels

Nursery: If you have a child in nursery, 4 labels will print. One is to be placed on the back of your child, one is given to the Check-In attendant, one goes on their diaper bag, and the last one is to be kept by the parent/guardian picking up the child. Parents may take their child to the classroom door.

Preschool: If you have a preschool child, 3 labels will print. One is to be placed on the back of your child, one is given to the check-in attendant, and the parent picking up the child keeps the last one. A volunteer will take the child to their classroom. (Please give pick-up receipt label to attendant when picking up your child.)

Grades 1-2: Three labels will print - one is to be placed on your child, one should be given to the check-in attendant, and one is for the parent/guardian picking up the child (please give pick-up receipt label to attendant when picking up your child.)

Grades 3-5: Students have permission to check themselves into the system. Two labels will print - one is to be placed on your child, and one should be given to the check-in attendant.

**Please note that labels are not only used for attendance but they are also used in emergencies. Swapping of nametags (which older elementary like to do) is not permitted.

Pickup: Return to the check- in area and an approved volunteer or staff member will assist you.

*The Children's Wing is a secure area. Only staff, children and approved volunteers assigned that day are permitted to enter.

Wednesday Evening Advantage

Nursery (Room 215B, Infants-2's) opens at 6:00pm and closes when the last class ends.

2/3's are in room 215D of the nursery suite (or C103) from 6:15-7:15pm.

They will have a story, craft and playtime.

4/5's participate in choir from 6:15-6:45 then Bible study from 6:45-7:15 in the children's wing.

1st/2nd grades participate in Bible Study from 6:15-6:45 then choir from 6:45-7:15 in the children's wing.

3rd-5th grades have choir from 5:30pm-6:15pm Bible Study from 6:15pm- 7:15pm in the children's wing.

For more nursery through 2nd grade info contact Evelyn Penkert at epenkert@firstpresgreenville.org

For more 3rd through 5th grade Bible study info contact Karen King at kking@firstpresgreenville.org

Contact Lori Shelton at lshelton@firstpresgreenville.org for more information on children's choirs.

Sunday Mornings & Serving

8:30 am Service (8:30 am- 9:30 am)

Nursery Suite

Childcare provided for children up to 4 years old.

Children will be taken to their correct rooms for the Sunday school hour.

Nursery is open until the end of the last service.

Sunday School hour (9:30 am - 10:30 am)

All preschool and elementary children may be checked in at the desks on the 1st or 2nd floors of the Children's Wing.

Preschoolers-1st graders can be picked up at 10:30am to go to service with their parents, or are welcome to stay for Kids Church.

Kids Church 10:30-12:15

This hour is offered for those children in first grade and younger whose parents feel they are not ready to attend church. Kids Church ends after the last service. Children will have a Bible lesson, worship and usually complete a small craft. You may also prefer to have your younger children join the worship portion of the service with your family. In this case, come pick them up at any of the desks.

Serving

All who serve must complete a background check every 3 years and complete a child protection training.

We require 2 persons in all classes at all time to comply with the Safe Sanctuary policy.

If you would like to be part of the Children's Ministry serving team, complete the Volunteer Application found on the FPC website (under Children's Ministries).

Nursery

When to bring your baby to church?

At First Presbyterian Church, we do not have an official policy as to when you can start bringing your baby to the nursery. Most parents wait until their children have gotten their first shots, but it is totally up to the parent. If your little one is distracting during the service, we encourage you to bring him/her to the nursery.

A few things you need to know:

- Remember to bring bottles, diapers etc.
- Label all of your belongings and make sure to write down any special instructions for your child.
- Please try to feed your child before you bring them on Sunday. We do not mind giving bottles but sometimes it can be very difficult to feed a baby food/breakfast.
- There is a room in the nursery for nursing mothers.
- For infants, complete the daily sheet when you drop off to inform the serving team about your baby's schedule.

Special Needs Ministry

This ministry exists to come alongside families of children who have special needs. We desire for these children and their families to be able to grow in their faith by hearing the Word of God and worshiping with the Body of Christ. Each child's needs are unique, so each situation is handled individually. We can provide a one-on-one buddy to help the child more easily get involved on Sunday mornings and help the parents feel comfortable in leaving their child while they attend a Sunday Life Group or worship. If you have a child with special needs and would like assistance on Sunday mornings, please contact Tina Jones to discuss how we can best assist your family (call 565.0921 or email tjones@firstpresgreenville.org). You may also fill out the Special Needs Care form on our website and bring it with you.



What is Buddy Break?

Buddy Break is a FREE Parents' night out/respice program where kids with all types of special needs (VIP kids) have FUN while their parents get a BREAK. At Buddy Break, VIP kids and their siblings make new friends, play games, do crafts, hear children's stories, enjoy music, and more! Meanwhile, parents get a break from their ongoing care-giving responsibilities, usually on a Friday night. We are an approved Buddy Break site and will be hosting Buddy Break events regularly. Families can register by emailing tjones@firstpresgreenville.org.

FPNS & Summer @ 1st

First Presbyterian's Nursery School Ministry is a registered program that serves parents of children ages three months through two years. Our goal is to help infants and toddlers feel happy and secure at church, feel good about themselves, and learn that God loves them. We provide opportunities for their spiritual, social, and developmental growth through play activities in a Christian environment.



Beth Plyler

Director of FPNS & Summer @ 1st

Beth is married to Wes and they have four fun, crazy children: Counts, Reese, Elsie and Caelan. Beth & Wes have also been called as foster parents! She loves working with kids and loving on their families. She has a can-do personality, is a caring, approachable director, and feels incredibly blessed to be a part of this amazing team!



Cami Lewis

Assistant Director of FPNS & Summer @ 1st

Cami, originally from Indiana, has been married to her retired Navy husband, Andy for 28 years. They have been stationed throughout the country. They moved to Greenville almost 9 years ago with their now adult daughters Cali and Caysi. Cami has been working with children the majority of her adult life, and considers it a blessing to be a part of the children's ministry program.

Meet Our Children's Ministry Staff

Tina Jones, Children's Ministry Director

Tina loves her position as "Our Fearless Leader", and when you are working with this crowd being fearless is a good thing! Tina is married to John and they are the parents to a mix of 7 biological and adopted children, 5 boys and 2 precious girls. On any given Sunday you will probably find Tina doing any number of things, helping in a classroom, participating in a skit or preparing for a Bible study. She is passionate about caring for the "least of these" and invites everyone to partner in our Foster and Adoption Ministry.



Karen King, Director of Elementary Education (1st-5th grade) & Family Missions

Karen was born with Children's Ministry DNA! She has been serving children for more than 30 years. She is married to Rusty & they have 2 biological children and probably more than 50 other kids who know her as "Momma King". You can always recognize Karen on a Sunday morning by her voice. She has that Travelers Rest drawl and is always calling everyone "sweetheart" and "precious." Karen is our prayer warrior and feels it is an honor to pray for people.



Evelyn Penkert, Director of Early Childhood & Primary Education (Birth-5K)

Evelyn loves children and babies! She is our resident baby whisperer, and if you are ever looking for her on Sunday morning a good place to start is the nursery. Evelyn is married to Rip and they are the parents to four adult children, and have started over with one adopted son. They also continue to welcome children into their home as foster parents, where they feel God has led their ministry. Evelyn loves the volunteers she serves with and feels blessed to work alongside such wonderful women on the CM team.



Heather Tomlinson, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Heather is married to Graydon, our fantastic Ignite worship leader. They have four beautiful children; Mallie, Lincoln, Tucker and Daisy, who they welcomed through foster care and adoption. Heather, who is a very organized and a detail oriented person, definitely has her work cut out for her, especially working with Evelyn, the polar opposite. Our prayer is that Heather will not give up on us and will use her gifts to help us win the most "put together" ministry at First Pres.



Discipline

Discipline provides a set of limits of acceptable behavior for the individual. For children, parents are the primary source for setting these limits. Adults working with children need to support parents' discipline. As children mature, the limits established become self-defined and self-enforced.

Discipline's primary goal, therefore, is one of self-discipline.

As Christians, the Bible defines many limits clearly. Discipline helps people to live within biblical limits. God also disciplines us as we grow in Christ. If you have a child with special needs that needs individual attention– please call or text Evelyn (787-8182), Karen (884-9824) or Tina (551-1101).

Technique:

Corporal punishment is not to be used in the church. We also will not scream or threaten. Redirection is our first approach to resolving classroom issues such as not sharing, being upset, etc. A “time out” or “thinking chair” might be helpful in assisting a child to control his or her own behavior. This is most effective when a teacher can quietly explain why the child is there. It is especially helpful if the child can also tell the teacher why he/she is there. A rule of thumb for length of time in a “time out” chair is the number of minutes equivalent to the child's age.

Health Precautions

In the event that your child is hurt while in our care the following procedures are in place:

- Parent will be notified if the teacher and/or CM team feel it is necessary.
- Report will be filled out and signed by one of the volunteers who was in the room and the parent. A copy will be made for parent and CM file.
- During Sunday School we do not regularly serve snacks but sometimes give out treats. All food products that we use have written on them that they are not made in a factory where peanuts are processed, because our ministry is a peanut and tree nut free zone.
- We ask that you notify us if your child has allergies, an Epi-pen or other medical concerns. These can be entered in our system and printed on the child's nametag.

Wellness Policy

If your child shows signs of feeling unwell before you arrive at church, please stay home! If you have any questions please read our policy below or call someone on the CM team.

We cannot administer medications ***WITH THE EXCEPTION OF AN EPI-PEN.**

A child will not be admitted into Sunday school when any of the following exist:

Fever* - Vomiting or diarrhea - Common cold - Sore throat - Any unexplained rash - Runny noses with green or yellow discharge that does not look like allergies - pink eye- or any symptom of the usual childhood illnesses

When dealing with these symptoms, children would rather be at home resting. And most families would rather germs not be shared.

***Your child should be fever free for 48 hours without fever-reducing medications.**

Security & Emergency Policy

Please understand that our biggest concern is for the safety of our children. We ask that you adhere to our policies.

Make sure you check your child in and that she/he has their nametag on.

In the nursery and preschool area, make sure you give the second label to the attendant.

To pick up your child in the nursery and preschool you need to have the pick-up label. Do not assume that the worker will know who you are and just give you a child. We do this for the safety of your child.

Make sure we have the correct cell phone number on the label so we can reach you if needed. Please pick up your child immediately after the service or event is over. Please don't linger to chat, etc. By the time the service is over, our volunteers are ready to go home or to attend church themselves.

Unless they are in high school or have been given permission by someone in Children's Ministry, siblings are not allowed to pick up children in the nursery or preschool area.

Pre-school area. We ask that parents drop their children off at the desk and not walk their children back to their rooms. This helps to minimize all of the confusion and keeps the separation anxiety to a minimum. Those who are not screened MUST have an escort to enter the children's wing.

If your child has a special need or requires extra help, we encourage you to contact the Tina Jones before you come. This way we can make sure to have someone on hand to help. Of course, your child is always welcome. We would love the opportunity to prepare for a smooth transition.

Each room has a map by the door to show where to take the children in case of a fire. Church leadership and teachers are trained on what to do in case of an emergency.

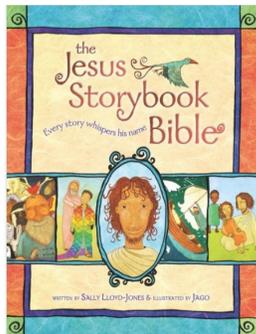
How We Protect Your Children

- Our paid workers are CPR and First Aid certified and have gone through a class on child protection and emergency preparedness.
- We have a 2 person rule, which means there must always be at least 1 adult over age 18 and another person over age 16 in a room when a child is present.
- All volunteers age 16 and up are required to have a background check performed every three years, and are also required to complete a Stewards of Children training to ensure the safety of both our volunteers and the children in our care. No one may serve until all requirements are completed.
- Young children will be accompanied to the restroom, but the adult will remain at the door. Make sure your child can wipe themselves after using the restroom- only paid staff may assist.
- Each time you bring your child, makes sure you check in and print out your labels. Allergies you have noted in our system will appear on the label. Make sure any special needs are noted in your family's profile.

Resources

Bibles we recommend for different ages:

The Jesus Storybook Bible (ages 4 & up)



NIV Discoverer's Bible (1st and 2nd grades)



Teen Study Bible (3rd through 5th grades)

