



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



HELLO THERE!

We're so excited that you want to be a leader in Children's Ministry! It's fun and crazy, and it's so much more than just childcare! It's an opportunity to point kids to God and make a difference in their lives. We get to show kids how amazing God is.

But most importantly, we get to reflect God's love to them, pray for them, and speak His truths to them. Kids need people in their lives who will show up to hang out with them, love them (and like them too), and show them what it looks like to follow Jesus.

Whatever your role is in our ministry this year, this Volunteer Handbook will show you some of the ways you can begin making a lasting impact in the lives and faith of kids.

Thanks for being willing to serve. Thanks for caring about kids and families. And thanks for letting God use you.

We are honored to partner with you in ministry to impact the lives of kids and parents.

Ashley, Rebecca & Ali

WHAT'S INSIDE

THE BASICS

Our Staff	1
Our Ministry	2
Our Big Win	4
Discipling Kids	6
Engaging with Parents	7

OUR VOLUNTEER TEAMS

Small Group Leaders	8
Preschool and Nursery Team	10

THE FINE PRINT

Safety Guidelines	12
Discipline Policy	16
Check-In and Check-Out Procedures	18
Code of Conduct	19
Lost/Missing Child Policy & Procedures.....	20
Safe Sanctuary Policy.....	21
Participation Covenant	22



THE BASICS

OUR FIRSTKIDS STAFF



Ashley Herring
Director of Children's Ministries
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Ashley develops, leads, and maintains all Children's Discipleship and Outreach Programs. She is married with 8 children and 2 dogs.



Rebecca Holmes
Children's Ministry Assistant
Rebecca is the creative mind behind FirstKids. She works behind the scenes, but she is really the one in charge. She is married with 2 children, 2 dogs, and 2 cats.



Ali Demessie
Nursery Coordinator
ademessie@hebersprings.church
Ali is our new little momma and knows just what our babies in the nursery need. She is married to the music man and has 2 dogs & 1 cat.

So that's us! Let us know if there's anything you ever need. We're here to help!

OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS

SUNDAY MORNINGS

Sunday mornings are the highlight of our week!

NURSERY-We have Nursery for both the Contemporary Service at 9:30AM and the Traditional at 11:00AM

WIGGLE WORSHIP- During the Sunday morning service, FirstKids offers Wiggle Worship for ages 4 through Kindergarten.

SUNDAY SCHOOL-Sunday School for PreK through 5th grade starts at 10:45AM-11:45AM.

COOLKIDS- CoolKids is our special needs class for ages 4-11 years and meets on the 2nd and 4th Sunday during the 9:30AM Contemporary Service. (This ministry is on pause due to COVID)

WEDNESDAYS

Wednesday nights are so much fun at FUMC!!

LIGHTHOUSE- Lighthouse is our afterschool mentoring ministry for elementary aged children. The children are picked up from school and stay through dinner. (This ministry is on pause due to COVID)

FIRSTKIDS WEDNESDAY NIGHTS- Our FirstKids Wednesday night program, PreK-5th Grade, meets for a fun, kid-friendly worship services from 6-7PM.

OUR ENVIRONMENTS

There are three kinds of environments for kids in our ministry. Each one is designed to strategically invite kids and families on a journey into deeper relationships with their peers, our adult volunteers, and Jesus, and each one is designed with every kid in mind – the kids who've grown up in church and the first-time visitors too.

EVENTS: Throughout the year, we'll host several big events designed to help kids connect with each other, with their families, and with their small group leaders. Special events will often be the place where kids or families walk into our ministry for the very first time.

WEEKLY PROGRAMS: Our weekly programs happen every single week. They're designed to help kids grow spiritually in four key areas. (We'll get to those in a minute.)

SMALL GROUP: Small groups are the most important part of what we do. They happen every week in our programs and are designed to connect every kid with a consistent trustworthy adult and community of their peers.

It's hard sometimes to know when you're winning in Children's Ministry, you know? Like, is anything we're teaching actually sinking in? Are kids really growing in their faith? That's why we decided to go ahead and define the big win for our ministry. It's the one thing that we, as a ministry team, want to achieve. It's the goal we want to keep in mind at all times. And it's what motivates and guides everything we do. It goes like this . . .

**WE WIN WHEN A KID
TAKES A STEP TOWARD
OWNING THEIR FAITH.**

TAKING A STEP

Now, we say "takes a step" for a reason. It's because there's no finish line or certificate of completion when it comes to spiritual growth. Instead, spiritual growth is a journey (a life-long journey) and no two journeys are identical. That's why our big win doesn't have anything to do with a specific skill or achievement. Instead, we win anytime we see a kid take a single step closer to owning their faith.

OWNING THEIR FAITH

What, exactly, does it look like for a kid to own their faith? Well, we believe there are four things that both lead to, and are a result of, spiritual growth. We call these four things our four spiritual habits.

1. **SPEND TIME WITH GOD:** This is an obvious one, right? Sometimes it's the only spiritual habit we can name. After all, isn't "growing spiritually" synonymous with "spending time with God"? Well, not exactly, but it's still pretty important. After all, if kids are ever going to make their faith their own, they've got to start spending time with God on their own. It means opening the Bible on their own, having conversations with God on their own, and discovering how they best connect with God through worship on their own.
2. **SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS:** Engaging in healthy community can, and should, be a spiritual habit we help our kids develop. But "healthy community" doesn't just mean hanging out with Christians. This spiritual habit is about growing in Christlike relationships with everyone.
3. **USE THEIR GIFTS:** Kids need to know that God made them unique, and special, and with really specific gifts, talents, passions, and resources. Then they need to use those gifts to love God, love others, and influence the world around them. Because when kids begin to discover who God made them to be, and then use their unique identity to love both God and others, they grow.
4. **SHARE THEIR STORY:** Kids need to learn how to talk about God. Sharing your story is the spiritual habit of making faith a regular, everyday, go-to topic of conversation in our lives. Because when we talk about God and His place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in His story), it helps us believe, helps us understand, and helps us take ownership of our own faith.

We count it as a win whenever a kid takes a step toward owning their faith by practicing one, or maybe even all four, of these spiritual habits.

Do you know the last thing that Jesus said to His followers while he was on earth? Some people call it The Great Commission: “Go and make disciples.” Duplicate yourselves. Go and make more of you. Take your faith and pass it on to someone else. **When we talk about helping kids begin to own their faith, we’re really just talking about discipleship.** So what is discipleship? Here are three thoughts . . .

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT LEARNING

Rather than only asking, “What can we teach a kid about God?” we ask, “How can we help a kid live out their faith?” It’s not just about teaching them about Jesus — it’s about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That’s why relationships are such a key part of our ministry. Because discipleship isn’t taught in a classroom — it’s modeled in everyday life.

DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

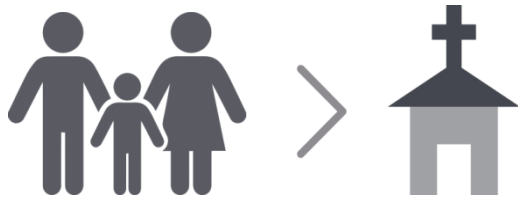
In the Gospels, you don’t really see Jesus doing one-on-one discipleship. That’s because discipleship happens best in a community of people. That’s why we focus so much energy on getting kids plugged into consistent small groups, why we emphasize the role of parents and families, and why we surround kids with tons of Jesus followers. Because discipleship takes all of us!

DISCIPLESHIP IS A PROCESS

Discipleship is never really complete because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process. And because we know discipleship takes time, we want to put people in the lives of kids who are in it for the long-haul. That’s why our small group leaders don’t bail on their groups after a few months, but stick with them for several years — because it’s a process.

As a volunteer, you are making a huge impact in the lives of the kids in our ministry. But do you know who's making an even bigger impact in the lives of those kids? Their parents.

Before we explain any more about what our ministry is all about, we want to make sure one thing is super clear. (We even drew a picture to help you remember it.) We believe that, in every child's life, this is true: the influence of a family is always greater than the influence of a church.



No matter what, a kid's family (not their church) will always be the biggest influence in their lives. So doesn't it make sense for us to partner with the most powerful, influential people in a kid's life in order to influence their faith?

That's why our ministry is committed to serving, supporting, partnering with, and engaging the parents of the kids in our ministry.

As a volunteer, caring for kids isn't your only responsibility. Engaging with parents is part of your job, too.

SMALL GROUP

THE WIN

We already talked about the big win for our ministry — seeing kids take a step toward owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished.

Small group leaders such as Sunday School teachers and Wednesday night group leaders have a very crucial part to play in seeing that goal accomplished. Here's what we think the win looks like for small group leaders...

**SMALL GROUP LEADERS WIN WHEN
THEY BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH KIDS AND
HELP THEM BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH
EACH OTHER.**

RELATIONSHIPS WITH KIDS

Without a relationship, it's impossible to influence a kid's faith in a significant way. That's why it's so important for small group leaders to build strong relationships with the kids they lead. You can't make a kid own their faith, but you can build a relationship with that child that allows you to love them and influence their faith.

So a small group leader wins when they choose to love and embrace the kids God has entrusted to them. They win when they leverage their relationship to lead kids, rather than relying on their position. They win when a kid sees their small group leader not as just an authority figure they have to obey, but someone they trust and want to follow.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

As important as a kid's relationship with a small group leader is, it's not the only relationship that matters. Small group leaders win when they help kids build relationships with each other because (remember) discipleship happens best in community. A small group leader isn't the only person a kid needs to influence their faith. They need each other, too!

THE EXPECTATIONS

QUALIFICATIONS

- Love Jesus.
- Love kids.
- Stick to our Code of Conduct.
- Commit to lead the same small group for at least one year.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up to our weekly program every week.
- Look over your curriculum ahead of time. (It won't be hard, we promise!).
- Engage with parents during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Participate in the entire Children's ministry service.
- Build relationships with the kids in your group.
- Attend the adult worship services on a regular basis.
- Attend all events, meetings, and gatherings for volunteers.
- Read, follow, and enforce all policies and procedures.

PRESCHOOL & NURSERY

THE WIN

We already talked about the big win for our ministry – seeing kids take a step toward owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished. This team has a very crucial part to play in seeing that goal accomplished. Here’s what we think the win looks like for preschool and nursery volunteers . . .

PRESCHOOL & NURSERY VOLUNTEERS WIN WHEN THEY HELP KIDS FEEL SAFE AND LOVED.

If you want a preschooler to love coming to church (and you want their parents to love bringing them) then it’s so important for our preschool and nursery volunteers to show up consistently. That’s because babies and preschoolers feel the most safe when they are connected to familiar trusted adults. There may be tears and tantrums, but there will also be giggles and high fives. In this ministry, we do so much more than just childcare –we plant seeds of God’s love and truth in the hearts of little ones.

When our volunteers help babies and preschoolers feel safe and loved, they lay a foundation where their faith can take root and grow.

THE QUALIFICATIONS

- Love babies and preschoolers.
- Stick to our Code of Conduct.
- Commit to serving regularly for at least one year.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up to our weekly program every week.
- Look over your curriculum ahead of time. (It won't be hard, we promise!).
- Engage with parents during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Participate in the entire children's ministry service.
- Build relationships with the kids in your care.
- Attend the adult worship services on a regular basis.
- Attend all events, meetings, and gatherings for volunteers.
- Read, follow, and enforce all policies and procedures.

THE FINE PRINT

SAFETY GUIDELINES

As a member of our ministry team, it is absolutely essential that you practice healthy boundaries with kids at all times, for their safety and yours. These guidelines exist to protect kids from harm and to protect you from false allegations.

NEVER BE ALONE WITH A CHILD

No volunteer should ever be alone with any number of children at any time. There should be a minimum of two leaders in a room at all times. You may not enter a bathroom alone with a child or allow more than one child to enter a bathroom without adult supervision. If a child needs assistance in the bathroom, the door must be left open and other volunteers must be present. If they need assistance wiping or have an accident, parents must be paged.

DOCUMENT ALL INCIDENTS

If a child in your care is injured or falls ill, or an incident occurs, an incident report must be filled out and signed by you, our staff, and the child's parents.

FOLLOW DIAPER PROCEDURES

Only trained volunteers over the age of 18 may change diapers, and other adults must be present while the diaper change occurs.

PRACTICE APPROPRIATE TOUCH

Showing affection is a natural part of ministry and working with kids. Here are some guidelines for showing appropriate affection to kids while maintaining integrity.

HUGS: Hugs should be brief and should be side-hugs. Kids should always initiate any hugs — not adults.

HANDS: High fives, handshakes, and fist bumps are always appropriate. Hand holding is acceptable only for kids in 2nd grade or younger.

HOLDING: A child over the age of 2 should not be held unless the child is being transported. If a child wants to sit on your lap on the floor, gently move the child to a sitting position beside you.

AVOID AND REPORT ALL INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

The following forms of affection are inappropriate in our children's ministry in any circumstance:

- Lengthy or full-body hugs
- Kisses
- Holding children over the age of two
- Kids sitting in your lap
- Touching genitals or helping a child in the bathroom
- Tickling
- Piggyback rides
- Any form of unwanted affection

REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Our church policy is to report any signs or suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

Contact a staff member immediately if you suspect a child is the victim of abuse or neglect. Do not attempt to gather information from the child or speak with the parents about your concerns. Do not talk with other team members about your concerns.

DEFINING ABUSE

Sexual abuse is any occurrence in which an adult engages in sexual activity with a minor. It could be contact behavior (touching) or non-contact behavior (pictures, spying, exposure, or conversation).

Physical abuse is any contact intended to cause physical pain or injury to a child. The law does permit parents to use corporal punishment, but the discipline has to be reasonable.

Neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or supervision. Neglect can also include exposure to harmful substances or situations.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Contact a staff member immediately if you see signs of abuse, such as Depression, sudden changes in behavior, paranoia, fear of their caregivers or others, aggressive behavior, anxiety, bed-wetting or accidents in their underwear, imitating or talking about sexual behaviors, wounds or pain, unexplained bruises, or untreated illnesses.

BE AWARE OF ALLERGIES

Due to the risk of allergies, we do not allow outside foods in the classrooms, and we are a peanut free facility.

Parents should let the child's leader or a host team member know if their child has a medical need or allergy. We cannot administer any medications. When food and drink are used in our children's ministry rooms, an allergy alert sign will be posted.

KNOW WHEN TO CONTACT PARENTS

If you need to get in contact with parents at any point during the service, let a staff member know, and they will text the parents or go get them from the service.

Parents can be contacted if children exhibit symptoms of illness, are crying inconsolably for an extended period of time, or if a child behaves in a violent manner.

HANDLING EMERGENCIES

We have emergency procedures posted in every classroom and regular trainings for weather emergencies, medical emergencies, evacuations, and predator situations.

If an emergency occurs, kids will not be released to parents until the area is cleared and the parents have the claim "receipt".

Discipline should always be done in a positive, patient and grace-filled way that focuses on helping the kids instead of enforcing punishments. When discipline is necessary to keep a safe and effective environment for everyone, here are three steps to take:

REDIRECT

- Get on the child's level and look them in the eye.
- Give a verbal warning, explaining why the behavior is not acceptable.
- Give a suggestion for the right way to act or behave and help them do it.

REMOVE

- If the child does not follow directions when you give them a redirection, it may be necessary to remove them from the situation or activity so they can calm down and prepare to rejoin the service.
- Place them in an area away from the other kids for no more than one minute per year of age.

REFER

- If the child is still not obeying, refer the child to your ministry leader for assistance.

Never attempt to physically discipline a child, belittle a child, or administer corporal punishment.

To limit the amount of discipline needed, here are some tips:

1. PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME

Become familiar with the curriculum and gather supplies before kids enter the room. When they arrive, be prepared to greet and engage them.

2. ESTABLISH RULES AND EXPECTATIONS EARLY

Communicate the rules and expectations consistently at the beginning of every service. Remind the kids often.

3. BE PROACTIVE

Follow proper ratios and make sure there are enough adults to maintain order in the room. Look for kids who may talk too much around each other, and split them up. Encourage kids who have trouble listening to be leaders, and look for ways to include them in the service.

4. TALK TO PARENTS

If you have to take disciplinary action with a child, let your Children's Ministry leader know. If you have to talk to parents, always do so in an encouraging, gentle and positive way. Ask the parents how you can help their child.

If a child exhibits violence to the teacher or other kids, parents will be contacted immediately, and the children's ministry leader will talk with the parents.

CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT POLICIES

Kids are under the care and supervision of their parents until they are checked in to our Children's Ministry. We require all kids 5th grade and under to be checked in by a parent or guardian and, and that the following steps are taken . . .

- Kids must be checked in using our check-in system. Parents will get a claim "receipt" that matches their child's.
- They must show their "receipt" with a matching code to the volunteer in order to pick up their child.
- A child may be picked up by a designated person if the parent gives them the "receipt".
- If a child has a special need or medical issue or allergy, parents should alert the child's teacher.

IF PARENTS LOSE THEIR "RECEIPT"

Do not release a child to a parent unless they have a matching "receipt", even if it's a parent you know. This will communicate to everyone that we take safety seriously.

If a parent loses their "receipt", they will meet with a staff member and show their ID, and we will look them up in our computer system to make sure they are authorized to pick up the child. If there are any custody issues, we will notate them in our check-in system.

As a ministry team, there are a few things we'd like everyone to abide by. Here they are!

ALL VOLUNTEERS

WORK HARD: You are so important to our ministry! We need you! So please, show up on time, give it your all, and be faithful with the responsibilities entrusted to you.

"Do your best... Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ." (Colossians 3:23)

BE KIND: Ministry is all about people, so to be effective in ministry, you'll need to reflect God's heart for people. With kids, parents, other volunteers, and our staff, treat people with gentleness, forgiveness, patience, kindness, and love.

"Get along amongst yourselves... And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out." (1 Thessalonians 5:13-15)

BE LIKE JESUS: More than any other volunteer role, small group leaders have the most responsibility because they have the most influence in the lives of kids. While we don't expect anyone to be perfect, we do expect every small group leader to be striving to make wise decisions, to glorify God with their lives, and to strive to look more like Jesus every day - especially in key areas like their treatment of others on our team, social media presence, drug or alcohol use, and sexual behavior.

"Watch what God does, and then do it." (Ephesians 5:1)

FUMC LOST/MISSING CHILD POLICY & PROCEDURES

This policy covers anyone 18 years or younger who is attending FirstKids, Lighthouse or other church sponsored activities on church property. Outside groups who use church facilities are not covered by this policy and are responsible for designing their own procedures.

If you witness an abduction take immediate action. Yell and attract attention to alert others around you to assist in stopping the person. Have someone alert the Security Officer if present or call 911 if there is no Security Officer on site.

Procedure for lost FirstKids and Lighthouse:

- The first person who becomes aware of a missing child will immediately alert all other classrooms, including Fellowship Hall if in use, on the children's wing. For Sunday School rooms, one adult will stay in the room with the children and one adult will go to assigned post at exits/entrances.
- If Lighthouse is in session Lighthouse Director will keep as many adults in the room as necessary to supervise the children and have as many adults as possible assist in posting at exits/entrances and to assist in search.
- Person discovering missing child shall next notify the Children's Ministry Director and the Children's Ministry Assistant if they are not on the Children's Wing.
- Director or Assistant will notify parents and Security Officer on duty (Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights).
- Lighthouse Director to notify parents if Lighthouse child missing.
- Children will remain in classrooms during search.
- Only persons involved in the search will be allowed on to the Children's wing. Those posted at the entrances/exits will explain why the wing is closed off.
 - Searchers will initially check on children's wing:
 - Bathrooms
 - Fellowship Hall, kitchen and pantry
 - Stairways
 - Hallway closets
 - Adults left in classrooms will check their own rooms, any cabinets large enough for a child, etc.

If children's wing search is unsuccessful, then proceed to other areas of church buildings and outside and conduct a search of church grounds.

- If child not located within five minutes Children's Ministries Director will contact police if Security Officer not on site. This contact will be made even as search continues in church buildings and outside.

Adopted by Church Council on September 23, 2018

FUMC SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse in the church (adopted 1996, readopted 2004 and 2008). The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse" (§ 162C).

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. [From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church—2000*, pp. 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.]

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child and youth abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" ("Baptismal Covenant II," *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

FUMC PARTICIPATION COVENANT

The congregation of Heber Springs First United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others..

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional) should volunteer to work with children in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's ministers before accepting an assignment.
3. Adult volunteers working with children shall observe the two-adult rule at all times so that no adult is ever alone with one child.
4. Adult volunteers working with children shall attend training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. All volunteers working with children shall give consent for a background check.
6. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their team leader any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

I have read the CODE OF CONDUCT, LOST/MISSING CHILD, & SAFE SANCTUARY POLICIES and the FUMC PARTICIPATION COVENANT, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth in these documents

Signature _____

Date _____