

# Children's Ministries Parent Handbook



REYNOLDSBURG  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

614-866-5864  
ReynoldsburgUMC.com

Dear Parents,

Thank you for sharing your children with us at Reynoldsburg United Methodist Church. We take seriously the charge of helping you with the tremendous responsibility of raising your children in a Godly manner, and we sincerely hope our relationship with you in that process is one fostered by open communication and a sense of partnership.

Our mission in Children's Ministries is to partner with families in their efforts to provide a foundation for their children and to assist families in developing those children into fully-devoted followers of Christ. We believe that YOU are the best person to be the primary disciple of your child—and we will do everything we can to assist you and create a supportive learning environment for your children to meet, learn about and follow Jesus.

Our vision is to glorify God, grow disciples and change the world...one child at a time. We desire to be a community of faith where God is praised, worshipped and glorified; and children are saved, changed, trained and – eventually – sent out to transform our local community, our region, our country and our world.

You can be sure that our curriculum is age-appropriate and our environment safe. Our teaching is Bible-based, relevant, creative and application-oriented. And, our programming is FUN!

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. Our hope is that you find it to be a helpful resource. Please do not hesitate to contact us with further questions – now or at any time during your child's time with us in ministry together.

In His Grip,

Your Children's Ministry Team  
Reynoldsburg United Methodist Church

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# Ministry Groups

*Children are placed in groups according to their age/grade as of September 1<sup>st</sup>.*

*Promotion Sunday, when children move to the next class/grade, is generally the second Sunday in September.*

## **Nursery Ministry**

The **Nursery Ministry** is for the youngest of our children, ages six weeks to three-years old.

## **Preschool Ministry**

The **Preschool Ministry** is for 3 year olds (potty-trained) through Pre-Kindergarten.

## **Elementary Ministry**

The **Elementary Ministry** is for those in Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

## **Rt 56**

**Rt 56** is for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

# Registration Procedures

## **General Registration:** (for all Children's Ministry programming)

Parents or guardians of all children (birth-6<sup>th</sup> grade) must register their children in KidCheck. You can do this from home ([www.kidcheck.com](http://www.kidcheck.com)) or at one of the registration kiosks, by the Children's Welcome Desk. We use the information that you provide to produce attendance rosters for our classes, for safety and emergency information and for parent contact information.

## **Registration for Childcare during Bible Studies:**

RUMC offers many adult Bible studies. Based on several factors, we may offer childcare for participants' children ages 6 weeks-11 years old. When you register for a Bible study that offers childcare, you must also register for childcare. There will be a link listed with the registration for the Bible study. Registration must be completed online.

\*Our policy is that we must have 3 children registered for care to continue to provide childcare for that study. This enables us to be good stewards of the childcare budget.

Please know that if you do not pre-register for childcare, you are not guaranteed childcare for that study. We staff rooms based on the number of children registered. For the safety and well-being of all the children in our care, we must adhere to safe child-worker ratios. If you arrive at childcare and have not pre-registered, you may be asked to wait until all registered children have arrived. Then, if adding your child does not violate our child-worker ratio, he/she will be permitted to attend childcare. If there isn't room for your child, be assured that he/she will be added to the list and adequate staffing will be available the next time your study meets.

We ask that if you decide to withdraw from a Bible study for which you have requested childcare, please contact the Childcare Coordinator, through the church office, to cancel your child's registration. Also, if your

child is ill and/or will be absent, please contact the Childcare Coordinator. This will enable us to readjust staffing.

If Reynoldsburg, Pickerington or Southwest Licking Schools are delayed or cancelled, we will not offer Childcare for any studies scheduled on that morning. Evening care will go on as scheduled, unless there is a Level 3 Snow Emergency.

## Drop-Off/Pick-Up Policy

As we lead children on their spiritual journey, a safe and secure environment must be provided. While we would like to believe that nothing harmful could happen to our children while at church, accidents do occur and because the church is an open, public place, we are always at some risk. Although we cannot guarantee the safety of every person, we are responsible for reducing and eliminating circumstances that could lead to harm or injury.

In 2005, the church board adopted the following policy in an effort to keep our children safe:

**All children through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade will be accompanied by an adult to and from all programs and activities within our church. Simply stated, a child must be walked to the door of a program and presented to the adults in charge. The child must also be picked up in the same manner.**

We trust that you will join us in wanting to keep your child safe not only spiritually but physically while at church. Thank you for your cooperation with this policy. Please know that children who are found unattended will be brought to you immediately in adherence to our policy.

# Milestone Events

In keeping with our Mission “to partner with families in their efforts to provide a spiritual foundation for their children...”, we have developed Milestone Events where parents and children come together for an event which teaches the parent a faith skill they can continue developing in the home.

**Age/Grade: Infants-Toddlers**

**Time of Year: Ongoing**

**Event: Infant Baptism**

As a family, you will meet with a pastor to prepare for this commitment. After the baptism, you will be presented with a Blessing Tote. This tote will include resources and tools to help you start your child on their faith journey.

For information on baptizing your child, please contact the church office at 614-866-5864.

**Age/Grade: 1<sup>st</sup> Grade**

**Time of Year: February**

**Event: Bible Presentation**

We hold a special celebration program to present our 1<sup>st</sup> graders with a new, age appropriate Bible. Parents are also presented with a resource guide to help their child navigate this next step to a more personal exploration of God’s word. Invitations are sent and families are welcome to attend this special ceremony.

**Age/Grade: K-6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Time of Year: Ongoing**

**Event: Family Nights**

Throughout the year, we will have nights set aside for families to engage in worship and service together. This may be on Wednesdays or a free-standing night of activity.

# Milestone Events

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These nights are intended to give families ideas/resources for how to build faith at home, to serve others together and to build community with other families.

**Age/Grade: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Time of Year: Spring**

**Event: Confirmation**

Confirmation, by its very name, is meant to “firm up” a child in the faith in which they've been raised. As children transition into their Jr. High years, they have the opportunity to be a part of a unique set of classes specifically designed to help them understand what it means when they say they believe in Jesus, what it means to be a part of a church, and why both are important. Parents are the most impactful voices in their child's life and have a role in this milestone event, as well. This transition is also their first step into student ministries and culminates with a whole church recognition. For more information, please contact the Student Ministers at [students@rumc.org](mailto:students@rumc.org) .

# Children's Ministry General Guidelines

Please see registration policy on page 4

- "10 Minutes Please". You've probably seen signs posted with this request. Please do not drop-off your children until 10 minutes prior to the service or event. This is to allow staff to prepare a room or rooms and to also allow volunteers to rotate on Sunday mornings.
- Please do not leave your child in an unsupervised classroom or area. Our leaders and teachers are usually very timely but upon the rare occasion that they are running late, please wait for their arrival before leaving your child.
- Label all of your children's items such as bags, coats, bottles, cups and diapers. \*The Welcome Desk has diaper bag tags available for new families.
- Please keep all toys at home or in your car.
- Please allow your child to finish all food before entering the rooms to avoid exposing children with food allergies to any allergens.
- Please take children to the restroom and/or check diapers before sending them to programming.
- Pick up your child on time and between services to allow volunteers and staff to rotate.
- Please keep your cell phone available and on "vibrate" in the case one of our staff needs to contact you.
- Parents must provide a matching numbered guardian name tag to pick up their child from a room. Even if we know you, you must present the appropriate tag in order to take your child.
- Please make note of the number on your KidCheck guardian tag. If we are unable to contact you via cell phone, your number will flash by/on the screen in your worship space.
- Parents of children who attend both 9:15 and 11:00 am hours are expected to pick up their children in between services.

# Children's Ministry General Guidelines

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## **Wellness Policy**

To ensure a healthy environment for all children, we will not be able to care for children who exhibit the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting. Children must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before entering our rooms.
- Pink eye or other eye infections (red, crusty, or watery discharge)
- Sore throat
- Sneezing and/or coughing, if persistent and/or productive
- Colored nasal discharge
- Jaundice
- Any skin infections; sores and/or crusts on the scalp, face or body, particularly if red, swollen, draining, or spreading
- Skin eruptions or rash (other than diaper rash)
- Swelling or tenderness of glands, particularly around face or neck
- Any communicable diseases

*Note: Children's Ministries Staff and volunteers are unable to administer medication to any child, with the exception of epipen injections, in times of emergency, and only by trained staff.*

We ask that should your child present with a condition after being in the Children's Ministry area (i.e. chicken pox, strep, skin infection, etc), you immediately notify the church office so that we can inform parents/guardians of the children who may have been exposed to your child. Please know this will be a general announcement, with names kept confidential.

# Children's Ministry General Guidelines

*continued*

## **Crying Children**

Our staff and volunteers are trained to handle a crying child in the following manner:

- When crying is not due to obvious concerns (physically hurt or sick), the volunteer or staff will address needs such as diaper changing, hunger or the desire to be held.
- Volunteers/staff are encouraged to try activities that comfort children, including quiet reading, music, playtime or art activities. They are to reassure children that they are in a fun and safe place. Babies and toddlers might be taken for an inside walk in a stroller to help calm them.
- If attempts to calm the child are not successful and the child has been crying consistently for 10 minutes, the parents will be notified.

Children who are new to the church or are experiencing the common “separation anxiety” that usually appears between 12 and 18 months, will often cry in the nursery. Please know that we are accustomed to this and want to be partners with you through this phase. Sometimes short stays (leaving your child for a short amount of time and then returning) are needed for a few weeks and then you can start leaving your child a little longer each time. You are also welcome to stay in the room to help your child get comfortable.

## **Snack Policy:**

- Children will not be allowed to bring open snacks into the classroom.
- Children may be provided a snack during the Sunday morning services.
- Childcare Supervisors will have a list of ingredients for each snack, if you would like to check for allergens.
- **All snacks provided will be peanut free.**
- Volunteers are trained to double check for allergies as the children are dropped off, but please clearly indicate if your child has food

allergies. You can never be too careful with food allergies! Thank you for your cooperation.

## Safe Sanctuary Procedures

Our purpose for establishing these policies is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth and vulnerable adults. Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct our ministries in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as all of the workers serving them. We will follow reasonable measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will educate all persons working with children, youth and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid policies and methods of discipline); we will implement approved operational procedures in all programs and events; 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 inquiries if an incident occurs.

These policies are outlined in our detailed Safe Sanctuary Policy document, which you may receive upon request from our church office or Children's Ministry Team. Below are highlights from that policy statement; those most relied upon by our staff and servant leadership:

### **Volunteer Application:**

Volunteers are required to: complete an application process, including written application (with references), sign a Servant Covenant, review our Safe Sanctuary Policy and attend an annual Orientation session. CPR is offered to our volunteers. We also require that new servants attend RUMC for a minimum of 3 months before they are eligible to serve with children or youth.

# Safe Sanctuary Procedures

*continued*

## **Criminal Background Checks:**

We conduct a criminal background check on every volunteer and staff member at the onset of their service. These are updated every 2 years.

## **Appropriate Supervision:**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult servants be in attendance at all times when children, youth, or vulnerable adults are being supervised during our programs and activities. There will, however, be occasions when this is not possible. In the absence of two adults serving in supervisory roles, these other safety initiatives can be utilized based on activity and age group to provide appropriate supervision:

### **1. Public Place:**

All activities are conducted in a public place where other adults are present.

### **2. Line of Sight:**

Activities should be conducted in rooms with unobstructed glass windows, a dutch door with the top half remaining open, or with the door to the room remaining completely open. In an outdoor setting, such as a playground, any one-on one interaction between adults and children, youth, or vulnerable adults should be conducted within the line of sight of others.

### **3. Rule of Threes:**

Each activity or group is comprised of at least three people, at least one of whom must be an adult.

### **4. Adult Monitor:**

An adult monitor is an adult who frequently moves in and out of rooms or activity areas, adding additional supervision as needed. The adult monitor will randomly observe the activity (at least once during a one-hour period).

# Safe Sanctuary Procedures

*continued*

## **5. Student Servants:**

There may be times when youth (paid or unpaid), who are themselves under age 18, assist in caring for or instructing children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such servants:

- Paid Student Servants must be at least age 16
- Student Servants must be in the 7th grade or above
- Student Servants will be screened as specified above (Students under age 18 are exempt from the criminal background check)
- Student Servants must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

## **6. Express Parental Permission:**

Parents may expressly provide permission for their child or youth to be alone with another specifically named adult. This may be done in writing or communicated verbally to at least two adults.

## **Restroom Guidelines:**

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, staff and servants must follow these guidelines:

- a. Avoid being alone with a child in a bathroom
- b. Never go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door.
- c. No persons under the age of 18 shall help children in the bathroom unless the child is their own sibling.

If a classroom bathroom is not available for preschoolers, kindergarteners, and children with special needs, an adult should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. It should be the practice to always go as a group. We try to avoid taking children to the bathroom alone. If this is not reasonable or appropriate, and only one child must go, an adult will escort the child to the hallway bathroom and check the bathroom to make sure that the restroom is clear before allowing a child to enter. They will ask adults who are entering the restroom to please

wait until the child is finished. The adult should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the child back to the classroom. If a child requires assistance, the adult should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

**Access:**

During programming, access to children's areas is limited to families, staff and approved servant leaders.

## Volunteer Opportunities

We encourage you to volunteer in Children's Ministries because:

- You recognize that you are the spiritual leaders of your families; and thus, you sincerely want to know what is being taught here at church so that you can emphasize those same values at home.
- You are passionate about walking alongside children and youth on their faith journeys.
- You have gifts that will enable the ministry to function more efficiently and effectively (teaching, shepherding, and administration). Many of our volunteer jobs are "behind the scenes" so don't worry if you aren't gifted in "face-time" with children.
- Don't know your gifts? No problem. We'll work with you in discovering the gifts and talents God has given you.

We do hope parents will support Children's Ministries with their time, gifts and prayers. We pledge to work with you to find that perfect place to serve.