



Children's Ministry Handbook

Revised and Updated
Children's Ministry Leadership Team
2023

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Purpose and Definitions

Purpose

New Castle Bible Church exists for the glory of God in our community. Therefore we seek to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the policies set forth in this handbook, our goal is to protect the children of New Castle Bible Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (defined below) from false accusations.

Definitions

Staff: For the purposes of this handbook, 'staff' are defined as the paid employees of New Castle Bible Church. All full-time and part-time church staff are required to receive a background check regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children and are considered mandatory reporters by Illinois state law.

Volunteers: For the purposes of this handbook, 'volunteers' are defined as those who work with children and are not in the employment of the church. All volunteers who serve in the children's ministry are required to go through both the children's ministry training (KidSafe) and screening (application/background check) procedures. This includes all volunteers who serve in the nursery, Sunday school, children's church, AWANA, and Vacation Bible School programs of New Castle Bible Church. The term 'volunteer' will be used throughout this handbook as an all-encompassing term for anyone who serves the children and is not church staff. All volunteers are considered mandatory reporters by Illinois state law.

Child/Children: For the purposes of this handbook, 'child' or 'children' are defined as all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.



Mission Statement & Core Values

Mission Statement

The children's ministry of New Castle Bible Church exists to glorify God by growing deeper and reaching farther. We aim to accomplish this by educating our children in the truth of God's Word, by encouraging our parents for their ministry in the home, and by equipping our volunteers to faithfully serve in the local church.

Core Values

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

Love for God evidenced by...

- **Trusting God:** Our love for God is shown when we express humble dependence on God rather than ourselves. (Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 7:7-11, John 15:5)
- **Knowing God:** Our love for God is shown when we seek to know and follow God through His written Word. (John 14:15; 1 Peter 2:2-3; 1 John 2:3-6)
- **Worshipping God:** Our love for God is shown when we demonstrate a personal devotion to Him and His church. (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Love for others evidenced by...

- **Putting Others First:** Our love for God and others is shown when we treat others the way we want to be treated and consider others better than ourselves. (Matthew 7:12; Luke 14:7-11; Philippians 2:1-11)
- **Showing Others Respect:** Our love for God and others is shown when we give respect to those who are in positions of authority. (Romans 13:1-2; Colossians 3:20; Hebrews 13:17)
- **Loving Others Together:** Our love for God and others is shown when we love one another in unified worship. (John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:1-6; Hebrews 10:19-25)



Philosophy of Ministry

God's Love for Every Child: We believe the Scriptures communicate God's special love for all children. They are valuable in His sight and demonstrate the necessary characteristics of those who will enter His eternal kingdom. Therefore, we treasure each child God has entrusted to our care. (Psalm 127:3-5; Matthew 18:1-10, 19:13-15)

God's Desire for Every Child: We believe the Scriptures express God's desire for every human to worship and glorify His name. Those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ are called to make much of God in every aspect of life. Therefore, it is our desire to see every child become a faithful worshipper of God and servant of His Church. (Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:27; Acts 2:39; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; 2 Peter 3:9)

The Problem Facing Every Child: We believe the Scriptures reveal sin as the problem facing everyone. All humans are conceived in sin, separated from God, and destined for eternal judgment in hell. Therefore, it is our responsibility to show children their true problem and point them to their need for a Savior. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23, 6:23)

The Solution Available to Every Child: We believe the Scriptures teach that forgiveness for sin is made possible by the grace of God through the saving work of Jesus Christ. Those who place their faith in the atoning death of Jesus will be brought into a right relationship with God and will receive the gift of eternal life in heaven. Therefore, it is our goal to continuously teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the children entrusted to our care. (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-17; Ephesians 2:1-10)

God's Desire for Every Child's Home: We believe the Scriptures prioritize the responsibility of parents to shepherd their children toward greater Christlikeness. Godly parents are called to raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord. Therefore, it is our privilege to regularly train and equip our parents for this task through biblical instruction. (Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

God's Desire for Every Child's Church: We believe the Scriptures emphasize the importance of every believer's contribution to a local church body. Christians are expected to be good stewards of the spiritual gifts He has entrusted to their care, including the ability to teach, love, and disciple children. Therefore, it is our ambition to recruit and train believers within our congregation to serve the children in our ministry. (Psalm 145:3-4; Ephesians 4:12-16; Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Peter 4:7-11).



Volunteer Oversight Plan

Expectations and Requirements

Expectations

Holiness: All Children's Ministry volunteers are expected to live in a way that reflects Christlikeness to our children. This means being an example in all areas of life including speech, conduct, and attitude.

Commitment: All Children's Ministry volunteers are expected to be faithful in their commitments to the ministry and the larger church context. This means consistently attending planned ministry activities during the week and church services on Sunday.

Unity: All Children's Ministry volunteers are expected to uphold the mission, doctrine, and core values of New Castle Bible Church. We ask that all personal preferences regarding mission, doctrine, and values be set aside for the sake of unity in the body.

Love: All Children's Ministry volunteers are expected to love the children of New Castle Bible Church in a manner that is consistent with our philosophy of ministry. This means sacrificially giving one's time, talents, and treasures for the good of our children.

Requirements

Tier 1 Volunteers: Required to be church members and obtain KidSafe certification.

Tier 2 Volunteers: Required to obtain KidSafe certification.

| | AWANA | Children's Church | Sunday School | V.B.S. |
|--------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Tier 1 | Commander & Directors | Leaders | Teachers | Directors |
| Tier 2 | Helpers/Nursery Volunteers | | | |



Training and Screening

Training

New Castle Bible Church will provide training on all Children's Ministry policies and procedures to all new ministry volunteers and will strive to provide additional training on a regular basis (or as deemed necessary). All volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

Screening

Children's Ministry is dedicated to the safety and security of the children entrusted to our care. We consider this a stewardship responsibility that reflects the values and priorities of our church. Since children are among the most vulnerable in our society, God calls us as Christians to help look after them. We believe the steps specified in this section communicate our value for family safety at New Castle Bible Church. The following forms are required of all Children's Ministry volunteers and can be located in the appendices section at the back of this handbook:

Volunteer Application: All prospective volunteers must complete our Children's Ministry Volunteer Application prior to serving in Children's Ministry. This includes a combination of personal, spiritual, and confidential information, as well as two personal references. This application will be submitted to the Children's Ministry Leadership Team for their review and final approval.

Child Protection Training Acknowledgement: All prospective volunteers must complete our KidSafe training prior to serving in Children's Ministry. These classes are offered on a regular basis. This information can be found in the weekly worship folder or by contacting the church office directly.





Child Protection Plan

Child Protection Procedures and Policies

The following child protection procedures have been put into place for the protection of both our children and volunteers. It is our desire to be a ministry above reproach.

1. “Two Adult” Rule. Two adult supervisors should be present during any church activity. Preferably, one of these adults would be a parent, or at minimum, one person over 21 years of age.
 - a. In the case of teenagers, one adult may meet with two or more teens.
 - b. When transporting students to and from church events the rule applies unless parental permission has been specifically granted.
 - c. In the event that an adult is meeting alone with a child, they must remain in clear view of a door window or the door must remain open.
 - d. If it is necessary for an adult to assist a child in the restroom, the door must remain open or else the “two adult” rule applies.
2. Church staff or volunteer workers must obtain the consent of a child’s parent or guardian before going out alone with that child, or spending time with the child in an unsupervised situation. Workers should also notify an appropriate church leader of such meetings in advance.
3. Programs that involve children and youth should always have adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.
4. Overnight rule. All adult chaperons and supervisors should be cleared in advance with the proper church leaders.
 - a. In any public building one adult must remain awake and alert at all times. Consent forms will be required for exceptions, such as retreats and mission trips.
 - b. Students housed in private homes must be in groups of two or more.
5. Adult leaders and students are expected to hold one another accountable to ensure appropriate conduct. Adult leaders must understand that they are responsible for the actions of the children toward one another during group functions.
6. Inappropriate conduct or situations must be reported immediately to one of the church pastors so that appropriate responses can be made.

Other Policies

Discipline: It is the policy of New Castle Bible Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Children's Ministry Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Medications: It is the policy of New Castle Bible Church not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are encouraged to become familiar with our child wellness policy (see below). Exceptions to this policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions, such as asthma or severe allergic reactions. Parents of such children should address their situation with the Children's Ministry director or an appropriate leader.

Child Wellness: It is the policy of New Castle Bible Church to discourage a child from attending a Children's Ministry function if he or she displays symptoms of an illness that could infect other children or ministry volunteers. Children must be symptom free from the following illnesses without medication for at least 24 hours before entering any Children's Ministry function or programming:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe cough
- Colored nasal drainage (green or yellow)
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye or another eye infection)
- Head lice (must be nit and lice free before returning)
- Undiagnosed rash
- Open sores
- Any infectious disease

If any of the above symptoms begin to develop or are discovered while in our care, the child's parent or legal guardian will be contacted immediately for pick-up.

Technology

It is always advised that any communication via technology (including text, email, and social media) between an adult and child include the parent of the child. There should be no private conversations between leaders or volunteers with children of the opposite sex. If a child contacts an adult through one of these technology mediums, the adult should respond by adding one of the child's parents to the response. Do not engage with a child on a social media medium that is time limited such as Snapchat. If a child is communicating about abuse from his/her parent, the adult should respond by adding a pastor or ministry leader to the response.



Physical Contact

New Castle Bible Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, NCBC has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children.

The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all volunteers working in Children's Ministry programs:

- Hugging, pats on the back and other simple forms of appropriate physical affection between volunteers and children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a pastor or ministry leader.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in the presence of other children or adults. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of volunteers in Children's Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- Any questionable contact initiated by a child should be gently discouraged and redirected. If the behavior persists, conversation with parent(s) may be necessary to help alleviate the situation.
- Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the appropriate pastor or ministry leader (Please refer to the "Child Abuse Reporting" section of this handbook for specific policies).

Common sense, purity, and respect should guide all actions toward a child. As a general rule, the following list of appropriate physical interactions should be observed:

| Appropriate Physical Interactions | Inappropriate Physical Interactions |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side or shoulder-to-shoulder hugs • Pats on the shoulder, head, or back • Handshakes • High-fives • Touching hands, shoulders, or arms • Holding the hand of younger children for safety purposes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hug • Kissing • Showing affection in isolated areas or one-on-one • Lap sitting with children over Kindergarten age • Wrestling, tickling, massaging, or touching chest, bottom or any private areas • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child |

Child Check-In/Check-Out

KidSafe Check-In/Out Policy

Parents, guardians, or those high school age and older can check children in and out of the nursery, Sunday School, and Children's Church in the following ways:

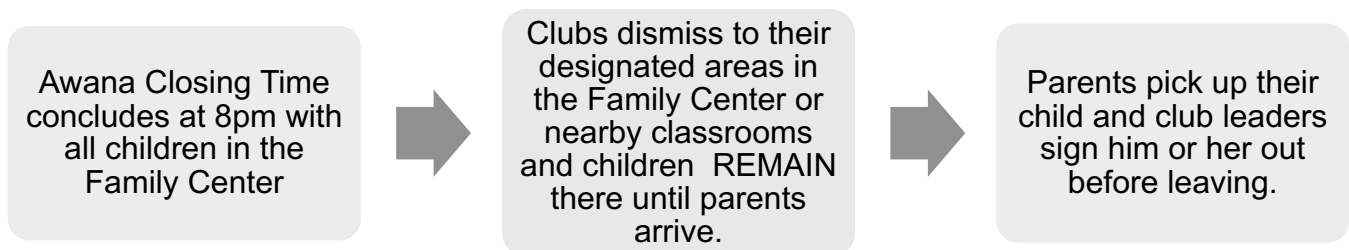
Regular Attenders: At the Check-In Kiosk parents enter the last 4 digits of their phone number then choose the names of the children they are checking in. Name tags and bar code strips will print for infants and children through 4th grade. The name tag must be placed on the child and the bar code strip used for identification at pick-up. Parents can also use the Church Center App to sign in offsite. They will receive a bar code that can be scanned at the Check-In Kiosk when a printed nametag is needed.

Out-of-Town Guests or One-Time Visitors: At the Check-in Kiosk, visitors use two adhesive name tags. On one they will write the child's name and parent's phone number then place it on the child. The same phone number is written on the other name tag which will be used to confirm identification at pick up (Nursery age through 4th grade).

First-Time Visitors who plan to return can use the QR Code on the welcome card at the Kiosk to provide contact information at their convenience. On their next visit, they can follow the check-in procedures listed above.

Awana Check-In/Out Policy

All children check in with an Awana secretary upon arriving at their club locations in various areas of the building. The child's attendance is recorded at check-in. The following process is followed for check out and dismissal.



- Families are allowed three previously authorized persons, high school age or older, to pick up their child.
- A leader will remain with the club until all children are picked up.
- Children must be signed out by their club leader before being allowed to leave.

After club leaders have signed all children out, we ask that you help us maintain a safe and orderly dismissal. Any special circumstances regarding the above procedures should be addressed with the appropriate Children's Ministry leadership team member.



Emergency Response Plan

Fire Safety

Each teacher is to have an attendance list, complete and readily available at all times.

When an alarm sounds, children will be asked to line up at the door as quickly and safely as possible and a teacher will lead them in an orderly fashion to the nearest exit and out of the building, moving to the west (back) side of the church property.

One teacher will remain in the room until all children have safely exited the room.

Once outside, the children will be walked to the Intersection gym where they will stay until they are all accounted for, an all-clear is given and/or until they are released by a teacher to their parents or other responsible person. (Parents MUST NOT take their children without making sure the teacher in charge is aware and has made note of the fact. We do not want to put a teacher or fireman at risk by having them unnecessarily enter the building in search of “missing” children).

If you have children in the nursery, you may go there and carry your own child from the building. Again, be sure someone knows your child is accounted for.

Tornado Safety

Instructions for tornado safety are the same as those above except that classes will immediately seek shelter in either the north or south basement away from outside walls and windows.

Enter from the north basement from the commons or the Family Center. The south basement can be entered from the main stairs or the north and south end of the old church sanctuary.

Child Abuse Reporting

Defining Abuse

According to 325 Illinois Compiled Statute 5/3, child abuse and neglect is defined as the following:

Child Abuse: An “abused child” means a child whose parent or immediate family member, or any person responsible for the child’s welfare, or any individual residing in the same home as the child, or a paramour of the child’s parent is known or suspected of one of the following:

Physical Abuse

- Inflicts, causes to be inflicted, or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury, other than by accidental means, which causes death, disfigurement, impairment of emotional health, or loss or impairment of bodily function;
- Creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function;
- Inflicts excessive corporal punishment or, in the case of a person working for an agency who is prohibited from using corporal punishment, inflicts corporal punishment upon a child or adult resident with whom the person is working in his or her professional capacity;
- Causes to be sold, transferred, distributed, or given to such child under 18 years of age, a controlled substance. A controlled substance is considered an illegal drug that can have a detrimental effect on a person’s health and welfare.

Sexual Abuse

- Commits or allows to be committed any sex offense against such child. This includes any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child. Sexual abuse that involves touching includes fondling, intercourse, forcible rape, and oral, genital, or anal penetration. Sexual abuse not involving touch includes verbal comments, pornography, exhibitionism, and allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Child Neglect: A “neglected child” means any child who is not receiving the proper care based on one of the following:

- Child is not receiving the proper or necessary medical or other remedial care recognized under State law as necessary for a child’s well-being.
- Child is not receiving the proper physical care necessary for the child’s well-being including adequate food, clothing, and shelter.
- Child is subjected to an environment which is injurious insofar as it creates the likelihood of harm to the child’s health, physical well-being, or welfare and the likely harm to the child is the result of blatant disregard of parent, caretaker, or agency responsibilities; or who is abandoned by his or her parents or other person responsible for the child’s welfare without a proper plan of care.

Child Abuse Reporting

According to 325 Illinois Compiled Statute 5/4, elders, ministers, deacons, and volunteers or support personnel in any setting where children may be subject to abuse or neglect are mandatory child abuse reporters and are obligated by law to report “known or suspected” child abuse or neglect to the civil authorities (911) and/or the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (1-800-252-2873)

In the event that a volunteer has reasonable cause that abuse or neglect of a child under his or her care has occurred, the volunteer is mandated to report the matter to the appropriate authorities (see above paragraph). Upon reporting, the volunteer will be asked to bring the matter to the attention of the Children’s Ministry Director, who will in turn seek involvement from the Children’s Ministry elder chair. Volunteers who feel overwhelmed by the abuse reporting process or desire to seek counsel may bring the matter to the attention of the Children’s Ministry Director so that they can make the report together.

In the event that a parent or legal guardian alleges abuse by another child or children’s ministry volunteer, they will be encouraged to report the details of the allegation to the civil authorities and/or the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

In the event that a child alleges abuse by a parent, guardian, peer, or Children’s Ministry volunteer, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Children’s Ministry Director and/or Children’s Ministry elder chair to determine if such allegations should be reported in accordance with 325 Illinois Compiled Statute.



Procedures for Responding to Child Abuse

If there is reasonable cause that an incident of abuse or neglect has occurred at New Castle Bible Church or during sponsored programs or activities, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. All allegations of abuse will be reported to the civil authorities, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
2. The suspected individual will be suspended from involvement in all preschool, children, or youth activities until such allegations have been resolved such that it is shown that no such abuse occurred.
3. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
4. If the abuse is alleged to have taken place on church property, the insurance company will immediately be notified, and the church will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will be immediately forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The church will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking publicly about the matter.
6. Biblical counseling will be offered for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing spiritual support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth. Any further action will be left to the discretion of the elders of New Castle Bible Church.



Appendix

Ministry Volunteer Application

All volunteers who desire to serve in our Children's Ministry will be asked to complete the Children's Ministry Volunteer Application. You can complete the application located on the following page or if you have a smartphone, you can directly access the form by scanning the QR code at the bottom of the page. You can also locate the form by going to **myncbc.org/volunteer**. Please complete this application at your earliest convenience. Our ministry leaders will receive a notification that you have completed the application once submitted.

Please be aware that this application will authorize New Castle Bible Church to conduct a background inquiry that may include criminal records, public records, and personal references. You will receive a separate email from our secure background check partner that will ask you to submit all necessary information for this check. This is an important and necessary step in the application process. As a ministry that serves children, we prioritize the physical safety and spiritual well-being of the young souls God has entrusted to our care. If you have any questions or concerns about these policies, please feel free to ask our Children's Ministry Director or consult the 'Child Protection Plan' section of this handbook.

We as a church utilize this application and background-check process in order to create a safe, comfortable experience for every guest. Once we receive your application, background-check results, and completed child protection training acknowledgement (included on the page following the application), we will reach out to you about next steps for serving our children at New Castle Bible Church.

Children's Ministry Volunteer Application



Castle Kids Volunteer Application

Personal Information

Name _____ D.O.B. _____

☐ Male ☐ Female

Address _____

Primary Phone _____ Secondary Phone _____

Email Address _____

I am ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

Do you have any children? ☐ Yes (How many: _____) ☐ No

Are you a Christian? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, how long? _____

Have you been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when? _____

How long have you been attending New Castle Bible Church? _____

Are you a member of New Castle Bible Church? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, how long? _____

Have you ever been a member of another church? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when and where? _____

Are you familiar with the doctrine, mission, and core values of NCBC?

<https://myncbc.org/about/beliefs-values-mission/> ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you able to support & uphold the doctrines, mission, and core values? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please clarify:

Have you taught or cared for children in any church or parachurch ministry? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe (including dates and places)



Spiritual Information

Please provide us with a brief summary of your Christian testimony:

Why do you want to serve in Castle Kids?

What do you believe are your strengths? In what ways would you like to use them in serving our children?

Do you currently have any other responsibilities that would impact your time commitment to children's ministry? If yes, explain below:

Do you currently have any ongoing sin struggles that you think would keep you from ministry to children? If yes, explain below:

Background Check/References

Please be aware that every applicant will be subject to a mandatory background check. This will be conducted by Checkr, a reputable company that works closely with our church. You will receive an email from Checkr requesting the necessary information for the background check. Be assured that this information will be encrypted and remain confidential. Volunteers will be subject to a recurring background check every three years.

All applicants must also provide two personal references. The Children's Ministry Leadership Team will contact these references.

- If you have been a member of New Castle Bible Church for **less than one year**, please list the following:
 1. A pastor or church leader from the church you most recently attended.
 2. A person with whom you have worked or served in the past who knows you well. (If you served in children's ministry in the past, please list someone who served with you in that context)
- If you have been a member of New Castle Bible Church for **more than one year**, please list the following:
 1. A pastor, small group leader, or other church leader who knows you well.
 2. Another member of New Castle Bible Church who knows you well and can attest to your suitability to work with children.

Reference 1

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Reference 2

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



Child Protection Plan Training Acknowledgement

Name: _____

All future ministry volunteers who plan to work with minors at New Castle Bible Church are required to review and complete this form.

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge the following:

- That I have received a copy of the Children's Ministry Handbook and reviewed it in its entirety.
- That I have either attended (in-person) or viewed (video) the Children's Ministry training program required by New Castle Bible Church.
- That I have been made aware of the expectations and requirements of all Children's Ministry volunteers at New Castle Bible Church, including both initial and routine background checks.
- That I have been made aware of the child protection policies that have been put in place by New Castle Bible Church.
- That I am considered a mandatory reporter by the state of Illinois, and I have been trained in my responsibilities as such.

Signature

Date



FAQ's

What curriculum do we currently use?

Our ministry currently uses the Gospel Project unified curriculum provided through LifeWay Ministries.

What is a unified curriculum? Why is it important?

A unified curriculum is a Sunday School lesson plan designed to help families learn the same passage of Scripture each week in age-appropriate classroom settings. The curriculum serves as a catalyst for strengthening gospel conversations within families, while also helping to unite the church in a shared experience of God's Word.

What criteria are considered when choosing a curriculum?

Many factors are considered when choosing a Sunday School curriculum for our children. The most important is an emphasis on the Word of God. We want our children to be well-taught from the Bible, which means finding a curriculum that emphasizes the importance of Scripture. A second factor is spiritual depth. A good Sunday School curriculum appropriately takes a child, student, or adult into a deeper understanding of the Bible. Finally, we desire a curriculum that is conducive to our instructors. This means the curriculum has a well-organized structure, provides clear teaching instruction, and offers a wide range of helpful resource materials.

How do we structure our weekly ministry around God's Word?

Our children's ministry provides biblical instruction for our kids on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Our church offers nursery for children up to two years in age during all Sunday morning and Wednesday activities. We also offer Sunday School classes for children ages two through sixth grade from 9:30-10:30am. A Children's Church program during our 10:45am service is available in which children between the ages of three and kindergarten will be provided with Bible lessons and activities specially crafted for their age level. Finally, our church hosts an AWANA (Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed) program on Wednesday evenings during the school year (September-April). This club offers children between the ages of three and sixth grade the opportunity to learn God's Word, grow deeper in faith, and cultivate lasting Christian friendships.

What special events do we host in order to educate children in God's Word?

Each summer our church hosts a week-long Vacation Bible School (typically the second full week in July). The event is open to all children in our church and community. Our ministry also uses special events such as our children's Christmas concert and Easter Egg Hunt outreach as an opportunity to teach the gospel to children and their families.



How do we shepherd children who express a desire to be saved?

Our church takes great interest in any child who expresses the desire to follow Christ. Therefore, we encourage our teachers and leaders to closely involve the child's parents or guardians in the matter. An open line of communication should take place between both parties regarding the specifics of the child's desire including profession of faith, repentance, and evidence of spiritual fruit. Our leaders are also encouraged to pray with the child, talk with them about an appropriate response to their desire, and continue presenting the gospel message where opportunity allows.

What factors are considered when discerning the salvation of a child?

Our church believes there are a number of factors that should be considered when discerning the salvation of a child including: a growing affection and need for Christ (Matthew 22:37-38; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21), an increased awareness and distaste for sin (Matthew 5:3; Psalm 51:17; 1 John 1:5-2:2), a profession of faith that is void of personal achievement or familiar inheritance (Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8), and a life that bears the fruit of obedience to God's Word (Matthew 22:37-39; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 John 2:3, 4:7-21).

How do we shepherd children who desire to be baptized?

Our church rejoices when children desire to be baptized. Still, it is our biblical responsibility to make sure the child is spiritually prepared and understands the sacred nature of this ordinance. As such, we make sure to maintain a clear line of communication between the ministry and the child's parents or guardians. Should the parent be favorable toward this desire, a meeting will be set with a pastor/elder of the church. The meeting is established to help the pastor/elder discern the child's salvation (see previous question), as well as gauging the child's understanding of and motivation for baptism. At the conclusion of the meeting, the pastor/elder will either formally recommend the child for baptism or that the baptism be placed on hold until the child displays greater readiness.

How are we encouraging young children to love and serve the local church?

Our church desires to have children who love the local church. We seek to cultivate this desire by teaching and modeling important elements of the church such as prayer. We also allow kids to serve the church by taking part in special programs such as our Christmas concert or missionary fundraising efforts. Children are also taught how to show love and appreciation for church leaders such as pastors, elders, ministry leaders, missionaries, small group leaders, and volunteers. We also encourage children to extend love to their peers by showing respect for one another and inviting unsaved friends, family, and neighbors to church.



What procedures are put in place for the security of our children?

Our church provides numerous safeguards to help protect the well-being of our children and families. Those who wish to volunteer in our ministry must submit to a background check, complete our KidSafe program, and be approved by our Children's Ministry Leadership team prior to serving. All ministry volunteers are trained to adhere to our ministry's safety plans and procedures. They are also instructed on all emergency evacuation procedures (fire, weather, etc.). Our ministry has also adopted a formal check-in/check-out process in which the parent uses the check-in kiosk. A name tag and bar code are printed and used for identification upon pick-up. Families are allowed three authorized persons to drop off and pick up their child. Finally, our church has security personnel and video cameras to monitor all church-wide activities. For a full review of all security plans and procedures, please review the Children's Ministry Handbook.

Where do I take my children on Sunday morning?

It is always a joy to have visitors worship with us on Sundays! Since our facility is large, our children's ministry classrooms are spread out across the main building. For a complete list of our children's ministry classrooms and teachers, please visit the Welcome Desk located in the North Commons just outside the Family Center. Our hospitality team will be happy to escort your family to the appropriate classroom location.

