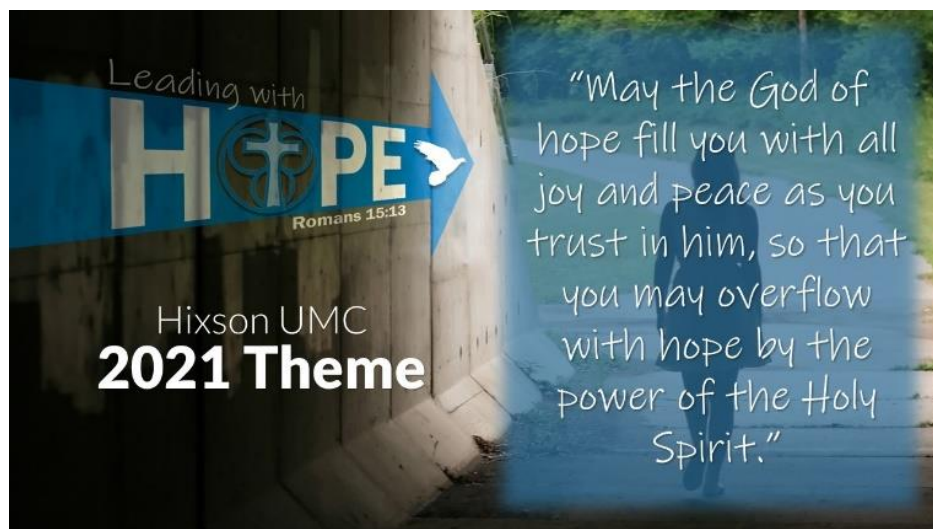




# Parent Handbook





## ***HEY THERE!***

We know being a parent is one of the hardest jobs on the planet, but it's also the greatest thing you will ever do.

We know your job isn't always easy, but here's what we want you to know: we're here to help in any way we can. We may be a children's ministry, but that doesn't mean kids are the only people we care about. We care about you too!

No matter how connected (or not connected) you are with our church, this Parent Handbook will show you some of the ways we're trying to care for your kid and serve you at the same time.

Thanks for letting us be another voice in the life of your child. Your trust and partnership means a lot to us.

We can't wait to see what this year has in store!

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# THE BASICS

## OUR STAFF



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## *Hixson UMC Children's Ministry*

### ***OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS***

#### **INFANTS- PRESCHOOL | SUNDAYS**

On Sunday morning we offer Preschool Small Groups (9:45 am- 10:45 am), Preschool Seeds of Faith Worship (11:00 am Services) and nursery ministry (entire morning).

#### **KINDERGARTEN-FIFTH GRADE | SUNDAYS**

On Sunday morning we offer Elementary Large Group/ Small Groups (9:45 am- 10:45 am), Growing in Faith for Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade during the 11:00 am Service.

On Sunday evening we offer Children's Ministry on Sunday Nights from 5:00 pm- 7:00 pm. During the fall, we prepare for our Christmas Musical, participate in Bible devotions, games, and enjoy a snack dinner.

#### **VIRTUAL**

Each week a virtual lesson is posted on YouTube and Facebook along with being sent out to our Children's Ministry Email list. This allows for you to connect even if you are unable to be present on Sunday mornings.

### ***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 guests 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.





## OUR BIG WIN

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.


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#### **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 Christ like 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.



## DISCIPLING

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 weekly ministry leaders are committed to the school year....



## ENGAGING WITH WEEKLY TEAM

As a parent, you are making a huge impact in your kid's life. The impact you're making is far more significant than any impact we, their church, could ever hope to make. You are the most important voice in your kid's life, both now and for a lifetime.

But in all of our time caring for kids, we've learned something really important. (We drew a picture to help you remember it.) We believe that, in every kid's life, this is true: your best chance at influencing your kid's faith and future is to recruit other adults to influence them with you.



Dr. Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark, authors of *Sticky Faith*, encourage parents to “develop a sticky web of relationships” for their kids. We love that idea!

Especially during the childhood years, when you're laying a foundation for your kid's future faith and choices, we want to come alongside you by creating a pool of trustworthy adults who can help you influence your kid.

That's why our ministry is so committed to small groups. Small groups are about more than just good discussions. Small groups exist to connect your kid with adults you can trust so you can better influence their faith and future.

So, this year, engage with your kid's small group leader. They can be a powerful ally for you and your family!

# ***THE FINE PRINT***

## *SAFETY GUIDELINES*

The safety of your child is a priority for our ministry, so we wanted to get you in the loop on how we plan to care for and protect them.

### ***WE SCREEN VOLUNTEERS***

Before any volunteer is permitted to serve with us, the volunteer is trained and screened.

### ***WE SET BOUNDARIES***

We have set a number of guidelines for our children's ministry staff and volunteers. As a parent, you can help us make sure your child is well-cared for by helping us maintain these boundaries.

- No adult may ever be alone with kids.
- Adults may never be in a bathroom alone with kids.
- All rooms will have the proper ratios of trained adult volunteers.
- All staff members and volunteers must maintain appropriate physical boundaries with kids at all times.
- To help keep kids safe and healthy, kids will not be allowed to enter the children's ministry if they have any of the following: fever of 100° or greater (*children must be fever-free without the use of medications for 24 hours prior to returning to a classroom*), vomiting, diarrhea, chills, sore throat, excessive runny nose, bad cough, rash, pink eye, or lice.



## ***WE HAVE STRICT PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF 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 5<sup>th</sup> grade and under to be checked in by a parent or guardian.

We encourage parents to make drop-off quick, even with younger kids who may have a hard time. Separation anxiety is normal (and healthy!) but if you want us to contact you after a certain amount of time of crying, let the leader know.

Our check-in and check-out policies are . . .

- Kids must be checked in for services by guardians, using our check-in system. When you check your kids in, you will get a claim sticker that matches your child's.
- You must show your sticker with a matching code to the volunteer in order to pick up your child.
- A child may not be picked up by anyone under high school age.
- If you lose your sticker, see a member of our host team.
- If your child has a special need or medical issue or allergy that we need to know about, let the host team know when you sign your child in.

## ***WE TAKE SAFETY SERIOUSLY***

Because we take the safety of your kids very seriously, and we screen and background check all the adults working with kids and we do not allow adults in the children's ministry if they aren't screened. If you want to be in the class with your child, see a member of our host team for a guest pass.

## ***WE CONSIDER ALLERGIES***

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

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

## ***WE NOTIFY PARENTS***

- If we need to get ahold of you at any point during the service, we will send a text message to the guardian.
- We will notify parents if children exhibit symptoms of illness, are crying inconsolably for more than 15 minutes, or if a child behaves in a violent manner.

## ***WE HAVE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES***

Our church has emergency procedures posted in every classroom and all volunteers are trained for weather emergencies, medical emergencies, and evacuations and predator situations. If an emergency occurs, kids will not be released until the area is cleared and the parents have the claim sticker.

## ***WE REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS***

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





# ***CONTACT US***

*LET'S STAY IN TOUCH*

This year, we'd love to stay in conversation with you. Here are a few ways we're hoping we can keep the lines of communication open . . .

## **EMAIL**

We send an email just for parents every week. It's packed with information. Subscribe at [www.hixsonumc.org](http://www.hixsonumc.org) or by contacting [meliawarren@hixsonumc.org](mailto:meliawarren@hixsonumc.org)

## **CELL/ TEXT**

Melia Warren at 423-508-2753

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

We post photos, videos, and updates from our ministry each week. Follow along at . . .

Private group on Facebook: Hixson United Methodist Church Children's Ministry