



PARENT

# HAND BOOK





## 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 kid'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 children and serve you at the same time.

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

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

-Gateway Church Kids Team



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## OUR STAFF



### Barbara Maureen

Kids Lead/Kids Director North

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I love connecting with and planning events for our Gateway families! Being with my kids, encourage others, and eating chocolate are some of my favorite things!



### Cassie Legaspi

Kids Coordinator – Central Campus

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I love our city and connecting with the people in it! My husband and I enjoy frequenting local restaurants, art and music shows and all the fun events Austin offers!



### JoAnna Jones

Kids Coordinator – Buda Campus

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I love spending time with people and fellow moms. I feel like a nap and snack can fix almost any bad mood. I believe the next generation is going to be world changers for God.



### Maddie Carson

Elementary Coordinator – North Campus

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I am a giant kid at heart. I love singing, dancing and playing outside. I'm told I have the personality of a golden retriever. One of my favorite things in the world is sharing the love of Jesus with the next generation!





### **Marissa Berry**

**Kids Coordinator – Pflugerville Campus**  
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When I'm not working, you can find me on my couch with a big blanket and a good book. A way to my heart is French fries.



### **Nydia Martinez**

**Early Childhood Coordinator - North Campus**  
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In my free time, I love to read, scrapbook, bible journal, and play games with my family. I love working with our preschoolers and supporting Gateway families!



### **Sulinda McManus**

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I love grabbing coffee with people. I think bubbles are equal to glitter...the worst! I truly believe our kids generation is going to change the world!



### **Temia Kerley-Rowald**

**Kids Operations Coordinator**  
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I am the first face you see on Sunday mornings when you come check in your kids! I love spending time with my husband and two boys. You can catch us most Sundays at the food trucks in the courtyard!



## OUR MINISTRY

### OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS

#### **EARLY CHILDHOOD | SUNDAYS (Times vary by campus)**

During the Sunday morning services, we offer kids programming for Infants through Preschool.

#### **ELEMENTARY | SUNDAYS (Times vary by campus)**

Our kid's program includes a fun and interactive time of worship, activities and small group time.

### 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 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 five 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 kid'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 five things that both lead to, and are a result of, spiritual growth. We call these five things our five key concepts.







1. **EXPLORE THE BIBLE:** This is an obvious one, right? Well, not exactly, but it's 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 and reading the Bible.
2. **KNOW JESUS:** Kids need to learn about who Jesus is and why He came to earth. When we talk about Jesus and His place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in His story), it helps us believe, helps us understand, helps us take ownership of our own faith, and helps us to live for Him.
3. **BUILD CHARACTER:** What is character? Sometimes kids have a difficult time distinguishing between "feelings" and "choices". Our goal is to guide kids in knowing that God helps us make wise choices and He has given us the Bible to grow in obedience, forgiveness, love and faith.
4. **YOU BELONG:** Engaging in healthy community can, and should, be a spiritual habit we help our kids develop. Whether it is a church, at home, or at school, every child wants to know that they have a place to belong!
5. **CHANGE YOUR WORLD:** 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 can change the world.

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



## DISCIPLESHIP

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 Bible, 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 want to be a part of this process. That’s why our small group leaders desire to partner with you in the spiritual development of your child.



## ENGAGING WITH SMALL GROUP LEADERS

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 an adult 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!



## 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, they undergo a background check, volunteer orientation and training.

### WE SET BOUNDARIES

We have set a number of guidelines for our kid'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 is alone with kids.
- Adults may never be in a bathroom alone with kids.
- All staff members and volunteers must maintain appropriate physical boundaries with kids at all times. Volunteers will be trained in appropriate touch.
- To help keep kids safe and healthy, kids will not be allowed to enter the kid'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.
- If you have a child who would benefit from additional support (special needs, anxiety, ADHD, etc...) please reach out to your campus Kids Coordinator to see how we might be able to partner with your family.



## 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 kid's ministry. We require all kids' 5<sup>th</sup> grade and under to be checked in by a parent or guardian and escorted to their class by the parent or guardian. Since we are not a daycare facility, *parents need to remain on our campus the entire time your child is in our care.*

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 parents, using our check-in system. When you check your kids in, you will get a pick-up sticker that matches your child's security code.
- 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 the age of 16 years old.
- If you lose your sticker, see a member of our check-in team.
- If your child has a special need or medical issue or allergy that we need to know about, let the check-in team know when you check your child in.

## WE TAKE SAFETY SERIOUSLY

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



## WE CONSIDER ALLERGIES

Due to the risk of allergies, we do not allow outside foods in the classrooms.

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

## WE TEXT PARENTS

- If we need to get ahold of you at any point during the service, we will send you a text message. We ask that you keep your phone visible and on silence during the service.
- We will text parents if children exhibit symptoms of illness, are crying inconsolably for more than 10 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 lockdown situations. If an emergency occurs, kids will not be released until the area is cleared and the parents have the pick-up 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 . . .

### NEWSLETTER

We send a newsletter just for parents every month. It's packed with information on our ministry and on how to be a more awesome parent your kid. Ask the check-in team how you can subscribe!

### SOCIAL MEDIA

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

**INSTAGRAM:** [www.instagram.com/g8waykids/](http://www.instagram.com/g8waykids/)

### PARENT CLASSES

Throughout the year, we'll host a Parent Class or two for parents. If you'd like an invitation, let us know!

### CHILD DEDICATION

We host two child dedications a year – one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Check our website for more info!

### BAPTISM CLASSES

We schedule baptism classes for kids a month before each of our campus baptisms. You can find more info on our website at [gatewaychurch.com/baptism](http://gatewaychurch.com/baptism).