



**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!





# THE BASICS

## OUR STAFF

### **Erica Benjamin**

**Director of Children's Ministries**

**[EBenjamin@SevernaParkUMC.org](mailto:EBenjamin@SevernaParkUMC.org)**

Erica loves watching kids grow to own their faith. She believes that kids should be able to get messy, ask hard questions, and be their silly selves.

### **December Brown**

**Nursery Care Provider**

December cares for our littlest members. Her favorite flower is the sunflower.

### **Lee Ferrell**

**Minister of Christian Education and Youth Ministries**

**[LFerrell@SevernaParkUMC.org](mailto:LFerrell@SevernaParkUMC.org)**

Lee has been leading our kids and youth for several decades. She loves sharing beloved Sunday School songs with our elementary kids on Sundays.

### **MaryAnn Spanolia**

**Sunday School Superintendent**

MaryAnn has been serving as a volunteer for Sunday School for over 20 years helping with welcoming new families, gather supplies for teachers, and provide a shoulder for a crying eye.

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



## OUR MINISTRY

### **OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS**

#### **NURSERY | SUNDAYS AT 8:00, 9:30 AND 11:00AM**

During the Sunday morning services, we offer nursery ministry.

#### **PRESCHOOL | SUNDAYS AT 9:30AM AND 11:00AM**

During the Sunday morning services, we offer preschool Sunday School.

#### **ELEMENTARY | SUNDAYS AT 9:30AM AND 11:00AM**

Our children's ministry meets for fun, kid-friendly worship services during the Sunday morning services. Elementary kids worship with their families the first Sundays of each month.

### **OUR ENVIRONMENTS**

There are two 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 events (big and small) designed to help kids connect with each other, with their families, and with various ministry partners.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL:** 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.) While building faith relationship with their teachers.

## OUR BIG WIN

It's hard sometimes to know when you're winning in children's ministry? 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 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 God's place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in God's 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.

## ENGAGING WITH SUNDAY SCHOOL 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 Sunday School. Sunday School is about more than just good discussions. Sunday School 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 Sunday School teachers. 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, they undergo a rigorous application, including a criminal background check.

### ***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 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 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 and escorted to their class by the 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 parents, using our check-in system. When you check your kids in, you will get a claim sticker that matches your child's.
- A child may not be picked up by anyone under the age of 14 years old.
- If your child has a special need or medical issue or allergy that we need to know about, let the Sunday School 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 encourage adults in the children's ministry area unless they are teachers or caring for their own child. If an adult plans on staying with their own child on a regular basis we encourage you to complete our Safe Sanctuary process.

## ***WE CONSIDER ALLERGIES***

Due to the risk of allergies, we do announce if food is being prepared or served as children are checked in. We try our best to be peanut free and have gluten free alternatives.

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 PAGE PARENTS***

- If we need to get ahold of you at any point during the service, we will text you.
- We will page 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 emergencies. 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 . . .

## WEBSITE

[www.SevernaParkUMC.org/SPARKFamily](http://www.SevernaParkUMC.org/SPARKFamily)

We update a website just for parents every month. It's packed with information on our ministry and on how to be a more awesome parent of your kid.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

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

**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/SevernaParkUMC](http://www.facebook.com/SevernaParkUMC)

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

**TWITTER:** [twitter.com/sparkumc](http://twitter.com/sparkumc)

CONTACT US

PARENT HANDBOOK

