

First Free Methodist Church

TinyTown

TotTown

KidTown

Family Ministries

▶ **Parent/Teacher Handbook**

2009 ~ 2010

▶ **Welcome**



Dear FFMC Families,

We're so happy your family is part of the greater First Free Methodist Church family! Follow the dots on the walls to three different floors of fun and growth! Our goal is to provide quality care for FFMC kids and we believe the spiritual formation of each precious child must be intentional.

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, described children as: "Immortal spirits whom God hath for a time entrusted to our care, that we may train them up in all holiness, and fit them for the enjoyment of God in eternity. This is a glorious and important trust." This trust is given to all of us— parents and teachers, but children are at church for just a few hours a week. The church can only supplement the faith foundation that hopefully is being carefully and intentionally nurtured at home.

One of the best ways parents can partner with the church in this faith development endeavor is to get involved with the children's programs at church. When you are actively involved in your child's classes and activities, you are communicating louder than words that their spiritual growth is important. You will have shared experiences at church which make faith-building conversations and learning opportunities happen more naturally at home.

This booklet is intentionally written for both children's ministry program volunteers and parents/grandparents to reiterate how important it is for us to partner in this "glorious and important trust!" When we're all on the same page, united in purpose and focused on joining children on their spiritual journey, we are part of a healthy and vital faith community.

Beyond involvement, we are also responsible to model for our children what it means to be a growing Christian. "We give our children a precious gift when we experience a growing relationship with God. When we are growing spiritually, God is real to us and we feel excitement and love for God, which leads to worship. As children sense that reality, love, and worship in the lives of adults around them, their image of God is confirmed and enhanced." (from Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, Baker Academic, 1998)

Blessings to you and your family as we all grow together in Christ!

Serving with you,
Pastor Jan

▶ **Our Mission**

...to provide a nurturing, safe and fun environment where children and families can experience God's love, develop a solid Biblical foundation, and grow in their relationship with Christ and with others.

▶ Our Programs



TinyTown Nursery | 9:15-12:15pm (1st floor)

We are happy to provide a clean, safe and comfortable nursery for our babies and young 2's. Our nursery offers a private room for nursing mothers, a quiet sleeping room for babies, as well as a separate area for active play. Pick up a more detailed brochure in the nursery or contact nursery coordinators, Alisha Bilderback and Sara Wetzel by e-mail: nursery@ffmc.org.

TotTown Preschool Program | 9:15-12:15pm (2nd floor)

Follow the dots to our preschool rooms on the 2nd floor! Our faithful volunteers offer age-appropriate Bible learning and friendship-building play time for ages 2 to 5 (pre-kindergarten). Different curriculum is offered each hour so children can engage in crafts, songs, snacks, games and Bible stories at either one or both hours. Promotion to the next class happens each fall. 2's (by Sept. 1) and younger 3's meet in Room 4. Older 3's, 4's and Pre-K 5's meet in Room 6.

KidTown School-Age Program | K-5th grade, 9:30-12:15pm (3rd floor)

9:30 Service

KidTown at first hour is a multi-age kids' program that meets after kids are dismissed from worship, around 9:50am. Kids will meet in the foyer of the sanctuary and head to KidTown together. K-1 kids and grades 2-5 have their own Bible classes and can be picked up after the 9:30 service or stay through the next service.

11:00 Service

During the Encounter worship service, school-age kids will experience a 3-part morning including play, puppets and drama, and age-specific Bible curriculum for a full morning of relationship building and learning. For more information about our Bible curriculum, please visit this website:

www.davidcook.com/curriculum/Wesley/index.cfm



Wednesday Night Programs (September through May)

Dinner is at 5:45, then elementary kids enjoy play time in the gym, crafts, Bible dramas and stories, and community building activities at KidTown. This year's theme is *Exploring the Galaxy of God's Faithfulness!* Our nursery and preschool programs are for kids whose parents are involved in Wednesday night activities on our campus.



▶ Our Calendar

2009-2010 Academic Year; note these dates!

September

- 13 Fall Kick-Off Sunday/Promotion to new grades
- 23 Wednesday Nights Kick-Off

October

- 11 Night of Prayer, 6pm (RSVP for Childcare)

November

- 15 Night of Prayer, 6pm (RSVP for Childcare)
- 26 Thanksgiving

December

- 2 Christmas Craft ADVENTure, 5:45 dinner; 6:15 crafts until 8pm
- 5 Youth free babysitting, ages 2 to grade 5, 1-5pm (RSVP by Nov. 22)
- 12 Saturday Musical Rehearsal, 10:30am (elementary kids only)
- 13 Musical performance 10:30am service

January

- 6 Wed. Nights start up again; Happy 2010!

February

- 17 Ash Wednesday Service

March

- 18 (to the 20th) *Northwest Christian Ministry Conference* in Redmond at Overlake Church for all volunteers (www.ministryconference.org)
- 31 No Wed. night program (Maundy Thursday service 4/1)

April

- 3 Easter Eggstravaganza, 10am
- 4 Easter Sunday

May

- 9 Mother's Day/Children's Ministry Volunteer Appreciation Day

June

- 20 Father's Day/3rd Grade Bibles/Summer Programming Starts

July

- 13 (to the 16th, and 17th) VBS! Tues-Friday and Sunday All-Church Lunch

August

- (August All-Together Sundays, 10am service)
- 2-8 Family Camp at Warm Beach



Dates subject to change!

For more information on summer camps, visit: www.warmbeach.com.



▶ Special Programs

Christmas Craft ADVENTure

This is a special event for the entire family. Invite your friends and relatives to make Christmas ornaments and gifts for others. Enjoy a quick dinner first and then enjoy cider and cookies as crafters create!

Christmas Musical

The goal of the Christmas Musical is to provide a choral experience for the children with an emphasis of presenting a musical gift to our church family. Rehearsals happen at 11:10 on Sunday mornings just before Bible classes. The final/dress rehearsal is Saturday before the performance on Sunday.

Easter Eggstravaganza

The Saturday before Easter Sunday (10am sharp!) is a time for kids ages 2 to grade 3 to come enjoy a puppet show, crafts, games and of course, an egg hunt in celebration of the true meaning of Easter: Jesus is risen!

VBS

Vacation Bible School is 5 days of fabulous fun! Starting on Tuesday, elementary kids enjoy Bible stories, crafts, games, snacks and fun activities that make for a summer highlight event. Preschool programming is available for kids whose parents are serving during the week. Day 5 of VBS happens on Sunday morning followed by an all-church celebration luncheon.

▶ Safety and Security

Registration Form— due in September (see sample form next pages)

All families need to complete a Children's Ministry Registration Form each year. Please let us know about any health concerns and make sure we have updated contact information. Forms are available on the counter up at KidTown or on the TotTown doorway carts. The nursery has its own forms.

Evacuation Plan

Evacuation routes for classrooms are posted by the door of each classroom. Most classes exit out to Dravus using the south doors. In the event of an evacuation, parents should not go to classrooms for children. Classes will exit toward the alley adjacent to our east parking lots (toward 7-11).

Teacher Screening/Background Checks

All volunteers and new employees must be screened to protect all children and secure the credibility of the church. It is our legal responsibility to show due diligence to protect all ministers and volunteers as well. Thank you for your willingness to participate in our volunteer application process which includes a background check. All information will be kept strictly confidential and secure. At FFMC it is our policy that there be a minimum of two pre-screened volunteers present with children at all times.



▶ Our Roles

Role of the Learner

1. Pray for your teachers.
2. Be on-time and come prepared to have fun and learn.
3. Be kind, polite and cooperative, respecting teachers and other learners.
4. Show respect for the facility and resources at church.
5. Invite my friends to come with me to church!

Role of the Teacher

1. Pray for your students.
2. Set an example by attending worship.
3. Maintain discipline in the classroom for a healthy, positive and safe atmosphere for learning:
 - a. Clearly and lovingly state classroom expectations.
 - b. If a student is distracting others, first try to redirect the behavior, then clearly identify the misbehavior and ask him/her to please stop.
 - c. When appropriate, isolate the student from the class with support from the Children's Pastor or Director.
 - d. Have conference with parents if needed.
4. Prepare in advance using the provided curriculum. Stay within the general concepts and themes that are outlined therein.
5. Encourage students to share take-home materials with parents.
6. Take attendance and show concern for students who did not attend the prior week.
7. Encourage memorization of the Bible verses outlined in the curriculum.
8. Be welcoming to parents and invite others to consider participating.
9. Trade with co-teachers or secure a substitute in the case of absence and communicate about the situation with the Children's Pastor or Director.
10. Be on time (15 minutes before service start time) and ready to interact with children. Make sure the kids are your focus for the hour.
11. Dress comfortably, respectfully, and appropriately for interaction with children and parents.
12. Please do your best to leave the classroom in order with lights off and windows closed each week.

Role of the Director/Children's Pastor

1. Pray for students and teachers.
2. Provide support and encouragement for teachers and learners.
3. Provide direction for curriculum and resources.
4. Facilitate communication with parents and community.
5. Organize classroom use and scheduling.



PARENTING TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SUNDAYS:

1. Make church attendance a priority for your family. Prepare the night before so you have a peaceful morning and an unhurried trip to church.
2. Talk to your child on the way to church about what their day will look like. ("We're on our way to church where Mom/Dad will be in big church and you will have fun and learn about God in your class. I will say goodbye to you at the classroom door and will be back as soon as big church is over.")
3. Say your loving goodbye and make a quick exit! For younger kids, it may be painful the first few times, but soon he or she will learn to trust in your return! Don't let kids see you checking on them, as this will confuse them about pick up time. We will get you if your child is inconsolable after 10 minutes.
4. Remind your kids every week to be ready to make new friends as well as to be friendly to those they know. Our job is to be welcoming to all, especially new friends who are visiting.
5. Extra-tired or sick kids (fever within the last 24 hours, hacking cough and runny nose that isn't clear) should stay home until they are well.
6. Please don't bring toys from home as they often become a distraction.
7. Parents with children in Grade 3 and younger need to pick up their kids immediately after worship and be mindful of them while on campus.
8. Encourage children to help clean up if possible and say goodbye and thank you to their teachers.
9. Show value to the projects and papers kids have created during class. Remember to talk about what kids learned during the week.
10. KidTown and TotTown are closed after Sunday School and no children are to be unattended in any rooms at the church at anytime.
11. Take time each night to pray together and encourage children to remember their Sunday teachers and church leaders!

BIBLES: Students are encouraged to bring their own Bibles to church or can use the ones that are provided in the classrooms.



Classroom Routine @ *KidTown*— what happens during Bible class time:

1. Take some time to allow kids to share about the past week and what might be on their heart.
2. Open learning time will with prayer. Review last week's lesson theme and memory verse.
3. The four parts of the Bible lesson (at 11am service) appeal to kids' different learning styles. Encourage active participation in each step.
4. Demonstrate and expect respectful behavior. Reiterate the main Bible point. Challenge application. Pray for guidance for the week ahead.
5. After the 11 hour, dismiss kids in grades K-3 at 12:10 to play until parents come for pick up. Help over-see pick-up time.
6. Connect with parents as you can as we build relationships.

▶ Teacher Checklist

Before I teach:

- ___ I have prayed for the children in my classroom and for help from God for my lesson.
- ___ I have prepared the lesson at home in advance and have been open to what God has to teach me through the curriculum as well.
- ___ I have all supplies ready and in order in the classroom 15 minutes before kids arrive and am ready to greet and interact with children.
- ___ I contact Pastor Jan for support, ideas or materials as early in the week as possible when necessary.
- ___ I make sure my cup is full before I serve others by attending worship.
- ___ I make a special effort to welcome visitors and their parents.

As I teach:

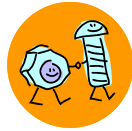
- ___ I have an activity planned for kids and invite them to participate as they enter so they feel like they belong.
- ___ I express my genuine joy to see each child and talk to them about their week.
- ___ I realize Christian values are caught better than taught, so I make building positive relationships with kids the priority.
- ___ I speak to kids in the same respectful tone that I expect from them.
- ___ I stick to the curriculum and make sure the lesson theme and goals are communicated (unless otherwise discussed with Pastor Jan).
- ___ I check for understanding as the lesson progresses and am willing to be flexible since comprehension is more important than completion.
- ___ I handle discipline in a positive way, praising positive behavior and redirecting negative behavior without shaming or embarrassing the child.
- ___ I encourage students to take their papers home and share them with their parents.
- ___ I don't leave children in the room by themselves— ever!



After I teach:

- ___ I make sure children are safely returned to their parents (Grade 3 and younger).
- ___ I make sure the classroom is tidy and clean for the following week.
- ___ I take time to evaluate what happened, celebrate what was done well and consider improvements for what might have been done differently.
- ___ I close the windows and turn off the lights before leaving.
- ___ I take good care of my teacher book and materials.
- ___ I remember the children throughout the week and lift them up in prayer.
- ✓ I realize what I'm doing is extremely important and has eternal value!

▶ Nuts and Bolts



Our 4th and 5th Graders

Though welcomed at our 9:30 Children's Church hour, this special group has it's own time at KidTown (3rd floor) in room 317 at 11am. Because they are soon to be part of our junior high youth group, we attempt to provide mini-youth group experiences with community-building activities and service projects such as a snow day in Snoqualmie Pass, buying and delivering school supplies to homeless children and helping at our Easter Eggstravaganza.

When 4th and 5th graders arrive for the 11 service, they will enjoy snacks and activities followed by Bible study. Jim Skadan and Sue Sanem do a great job teaching and coaching this group and invite parents to be involved.

Membership, Baptism, Baby Dedication

A Youth Membership Class (or Junior Membership) is presented every-other year to our 4th and 5th graders, typically before Easter. After attending the class, kids can be baptized and can choose to become Youth Members at the next time of new-member recognition. Pastor Jan is also happy to meet one-on-one with the young inquirer. Parents can contact Pastor Mark through the church office regarding infant baptism or dedication.

Promotion

All children continue with their age and class group throughout the summer. Promotion happens in the fall at Kick-Off Sunday. While class grouping may be adjusted to accommodate numbers of children, it is important for children to be in the same grade/school year at church as they are in the academic setting. Toddlers must be two by the first of September in order to move up to TotTown.

Teacher Appreciation

Volunteers are the backbone of our program. We are grateful for parents who are involved as well as the many folks who serve even without children in the program. We believe that some serve in children's ministries because of their giftedness. Others serve because they understand it is their responsibility and duty as part of the family of Christ. Many thanks to all our volunteers!

We would like to honor our volunteers with a Sunday afternoon luncheon in the spring and will be looking for helpers to make this happen. If you have other ideas for showing appreciation to our team, please share them. Parents are encouraged to bring cards of appreciation to their teachers and helpers on May 9th.

Family Ministries Vision Team

While many of our routines and practices are established, there is always room for evaluation and change. We welcome your ideas for community outreach as well as your constructive observations. Most importantly we ask for your prayers for our children and families and for our team. Please don't hesitate to give Jan a call or stop by the church office! We're all on the same team!

▶ etc...

Teacher Resource Closet

All teachers and volunteers may use items kept in our supply closet on the 3rd floor. Please take only what you need and return what is unused. For example, if you need cotton balls for a classroom project, try to leave some in case another class needs them as well, or leave a note. We do our best to keep our closet well-stocked. Let us know if we need to order items. If you have craft items or wish to donate supplies to the closet or to our games and activities collection, we welcome your generosity! We would just ask that they be in good, usable or working condition.

Foods served (snacks)

In our nursery and preschool we only serve *Rice Chex* or *Kix Cereal*, due to allergy restrictions. No other outside food can be brought into these programs unless discussed prior with coordinators/teachers. At KidTown (3rd floor) various snack items may be served. Please provide us with accurate allergy or restriction information.

Parenting Classes

A parenting class is typically offered in the spring. More information to come!

Parent visits and participation

Our programs are volunteer-based and we welcome your participation! We understand that people are in different seasons of life and can't always help, but we trust you will keep us in your prayers! Please contact Pastor Jan if you'd like to help or if you'd like to observe in one of our programs. Our volunteer positions include:

- Teachers
- Special Events Helpers
- Puppets and Actors
- Curriculum Preparation Teams
- Games and Crafts Leaders
- Classroom Assistants
- Music Leaders
- Supply Coordinators
- Cleaning/Organizing Teams
- Special Needs Teams



Interns and Childcare Workers

Beyond volunteer opportunities, FFMC has an internship program for persons interested in Christian Education and Spiritual Formation of Children as well as paid babysitting opportunities. Please contact Pastor Jan for more information.

