



Children's Ministry Handbook

STPETERSTAMWORTH

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Children's Ministry at St Peter's

At St Peter's we value children because our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus do. They are people made in the image of God, who are sinners loved by God and who need to know Jesus as king and saviour.

Children's ministry therefore is about serving children in age appropriate ways so that they might trust in God as their loving heavenly Father and grow in knowing Jesus and living for him as their king.

The scope of our children's ministry is for children (including babies and toddlers) from creche age (0-3) up to and including year 8.

Children's ministry and the 5 purposes of Church

At St Peter's we think about who we are in terms of the 5 purposes of Church. These same purposes apply to children's ministry. We want our children to magnify God and make much of Jesus in their lives (Magnification). We want them to be able to tell others about Jesus (Mission). We want them to know they are part of a bigger Church family made up of brothers and sisters in Christ (Members). We want to see them grow in a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus and to grow in Christ like maturity (Maturity) and we want to see them serving in ways appropriate to their age (Ministry.)

We pursue these purposes by listening to God in his word and praying for his help in the power of Holy Spirit.

How do children grow in the purposes God has for them?

Children grow in the purposes God has for them through the means he has given. Children come to know Jesus as saviour and king through the power of the gospel, as it is applied to their lives in prayer, as they are taught and cared for by godly adults who model Christ like behaviour and as these adults persevere in this ministry. There are 4 main means God has given us for growth, both for adults and children. They are:

- 1) The Power of the gospel
- 2) Prayer
- 3) People
- 4) Perseverance

Power of the gospel in children's ministry

The gospel, the message about who Jesus is, what he has done, is God's power for salvation (Romans 1.16-18). As children hear the gospel message concerning the Lord Jesus in ways they can understand, God, by the power of this Spirit, can transfer them into the kingdom of his beloved son (Colossians 1.3-14). Children can hear, believe and respond to Jesus as their king and saviour.

However, we can forget that the gospel is also the power for children to grow in maturity. When Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians he thanked God for their growth - growth not only in number but growth also in faith, hope and love. Paul attributes this growth in maturity to the power of the gospel message in their lives (Colossians 1.3-8, 1 Thessalonians 2.13). Children can therefore grow in their understanding of who Jesus is and also grow in Christ like behaviour.

Since the gospel is the word of truth (Ephesians 1.13), the gospel itself springs from the promises God made in his word in the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 15.3-4). It is through hearing God's word of truth in the scriptures, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, which point to Jesus, understanding it and applying it to the lives of children, that they grow in Christian maturity. Without God's word heard, understood and applied in appropriate ways to children, there is no salvation or growth in maturity.

Prayer in children's ministry

Applying the gospel word of truth to the lives of children, as they hear it and understand it, is essential for their growth in Christian maturity. Yet in order for children (and adults) to hear correctly, understand rightly and be able to apply this word appropriately to their lives they need the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel doesn't bear fruit in their lives, unless God works in their hearts and minds by his Spirit.

This means we need to pray to God to help children to grow and children can be encouraged to pray themselves to God for this. Children, like adults, have the enormous privilege of approaching God as their heavenly father who loves them in Christ. They can give thanks to him and they are dependent on him working in them to transform their lives. This is not a work they, or we can do on our own, they need his help for God is the one who brings the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Prayer then is an essential means God has given us for Christian growth in children's ministry. We need to pray for the children we serve that they would come to trust in Christ, grow in him and persevere in the faith.

People in children's ministry

God's word applied to the lives of children by the power of his Spirit is essential for Christian growth.

Yet the gospel and prayer are not the only things God has given us for growth, he has also given us people. We grow not simply individually but we grow as the body of Christ, his church family. God has designed things such that we need each other in order to grow. Paul says in Ephesians that we grow in Christian maturity as each member of the body does its work (Ephesians 4). This is the same also for children, they can speak the word of truth to each other in love. Each member of Christ's body, his church, has been uniquely gifted to help his brothers and sisters grow in Christ likeness and to help others come to know Jesus (Romans 12.3-13, 1 Corinthians 12).

PARENTS (PRIMARY CARERS) AND THE CHURCH FAMILY

In the church family parents are the primary care givers of children. As a result parents at Church need to be encouraged and built up so they can speak the word of truth in love to their children in their everyday relationship with them. Since children depend chiefly on their parents to help them grow in knowing Jesus in order that they might trust him, our children's ministry will seek to spur on and equip parents in this task. In the home context children need to receive instruction, godly discipline and be shown what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus. The Church family supplements this primary role of parents. The Church family does this by seeking to build up parents in their essential everyday role. The members of the Church family also teach and model the basics of the Christian life to children. So it is together that we learn what it is to love, to be patient, to forebear and to encourage so that we might together grow in Christ likeness.

The result of this is that gathering together in Jesus' name, to hear his word and to pray to him is essential for our Christian growth in maturity. Growth in maturity happens as we meet with God's people in our regular gatherings big or small, with adults or with children.

Persevering in children's ministry

Just as it takes time for adults to grow in God's purposes for them, so too it takes time for children to come to understand and believe the gospel for themselves. The result is that this ministry requires perseverance over time. Those who are involved in children's ministry have the great privilege of seeing children grow physically and also spiritually. This however requires patience, wisdom and a long term perspective. In the ups and downs of this ministry the parents and adults caring for them will need the power of God's Spirit to keep serving children in the good days and the not so good days.

Safe ministry to Children

At St Peter's we are committed to caring for all people in love and in safe ways. Special care needs to be taken for those amongst us who are vulnerable. Children are vulnerable because of their age and so good practice in this area means:

- Every person over 18 appointed to a role in children's ministry at St Peter's must have a current Working With Children's Check Number (WWCC).
- Every person over 18 must have completed our Safe Ministry Training before engaging in children's ministry.
- Teenage helpers over 15 are encouraged to complete the Juniors Safe Ministry Training.
- No adult, other than a primary care giver, is to be alone with a child or children in the ministry to children at St Peter's. Two adults must be present at all times in any children's ministry at St Peter's.

Children's ministry as a team ministry

Children's ministry at St Peter's is a team ministry. Working on a team has many benefits. Team members each bring their own strengths and experiences. Team members can support and encourage each other in their ministry. Team members can brainstorm and produce a creative environment to produce the best outcomes. Being on a team means that team members can spur each other on in the values of the team, have a real sense of purpose and direction and can hold each other accountable concerning these values and purposes.

At St Peter's the Children's team culture is lead by the Children's Ministry Leader. The Children's Ministry Leader will gather the team(s) together on various occasions throughout the year to:

- 1) Pray for the ministry to the children
- 2) Create the team values and expectations
- 3) Train the team members
- 4) Coordinate and structure the functioning of the children's ministry
- 5) Help the team to work together in a trusting environment for the good of the children

Being part of a team has its privileges and obligations. Team members need to know what these are before they agree to come on the team. Those who are on the team, having agreed to the expectations and values, should expect to be held accountable to that agreement.

Children's Ministry Leader

Role description

The primary role of the Children's Ministry Leader is to lead, oversee and develop our children's ministry at St Peter's.

The aim of this ministry is described in the 5 purposes of Church life (See page 4).

The Children's Ministry Leader, in consultation with the Senior Minister, has authority to appoint Kid's Church Teachers, helpers, creche coordinators and creche helpers. He/she will train, direct and support the members on the various children's teams.

Role requirements

The Children's Ministry Leader will be a mature Christian who is of proven Christian character and conviction.

- He/she will need to have had experience in children's ministry
- He/she will attend the Sun@10 and Sun@4 congregations of St Peter's
- He/she will need to submit to the leadership of the senior minister
- He/she will need to have a WWCC and do safe ministry training

Key responsibilities

- To pray for this ministry
- To have a transfer/transform mentality (Evangelism and Christian growth)
- To recruit, train, equip and empower Kid's Church teachers, helpers, creche coordinators and helpers for their particular ministry
- Ensure that the Safe Ministry requirements are met by each member on the children's ministry teams
- To choose the teaching material to be used in consultation with the senior minister
- To have pastoral concern for the team members
- To ensure a safe environment for children where appropriate behaviour is required so that the children may learn and grow
- To coordinate the smooth running of the children's ministry through the make-up of classes and the establishment of teams
- To communicate with parents concerning this ministry as necessary

Commitment required

- Part-time paid role
- Meet with senior pastor every 4 weeks
- Be part of staff meeting

Kid's Church Teacher

Role description

The primary role of the Kid's Church Teacher is to teach children, in a certain age group, the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus in a loving and godly way.

The aim of this ministry is to see children come to know the love of the Father through understanding who Jesus is and what he has done for them, that they might live with him as their saviour and king.

Role requirements

The Kid's Church Teacher will be a mature adult (over 18 yrs old) Christian who is of proven Christian character and conviction, acknowledging Jesus as their personal Lord and saviour.

He/She will regularly attend one of the St Peter's congregations.

They will be seeking to grow themselves in Christian maturity through personal bible reading and prayer.

They will be committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and 'above reproach', knowing that their lifestyle is a model for the children they lead.

They will be committed to being a responsible teacher, which includes being well prepared for Kid's Church lessons and always making the safety of the children in their care a priority.

They will be appointed to this role by the Children's Ministry Leader and not by default or by invitation of another Children's Ministry team member.

Key responsibilities

- To pray for this ministry and the children in their care
- To be well prepared for the lessons and arrive before Church starts
- To accept being on a roster, giving unavailabilities each term and finding a replacement from the team if for some reason (sickness etc) they can't fulfil their role on a given WE
- To ensure that the teaching material is passed on to the next teacher in an appropriate time frame
- To submit to the leadership of St Peter's and in particular that of the Children's Ministry Leader
- To give attention to those they lead during the program time and communicate any concerns to the Children's Ministry Leader as soon as possible
- To have a WWCC and do safe ministry training (refreshed every 3 years)
- To understand and sign the job description and commitment agreement

Commitment required

- To be well prepared for each lesson (2 hours prep is a good rule of thumb)
- Be present at the 4 leaders meetings throughout the year

Kid's Church Helper

Role description

The primary role of the Kid's Church Helper is to *assist* the Kid's Church Teacher in a certain age group, as they seek to teach the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus in a loving and godly way.

The aim of this ministry is to see children come to know the love of the Father through understanding who Jesus is and what he has done for them that they might live with him as their saviour and king.

Role requirements

He/She will regularly attend one of the St Peter's congregations.

They will be either an adult or committed Christian teenager.

They will be seeking to grow themselves in Christian maturity through personal Bible reading and prayer.

They are committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and 'above reproach', knowing that my lifestyle is a model for the children they lead.

They will be appointed by the Children's Ministry Leader.

Key responsibilities

- To pray for this ministry and the children in their care, no other preparation is required
- To ask the teacher how they can best help in the group and to prepare for the class in consultation with the teacher
- To accept being on a roster
- To submit to the leadership of St Peter's and in particular that of the Children's Ministry Leader
- To have a WWCC and do safe ministry training (refreshed every 3 years)
- To understand and sign the job description and commitment agreement

Commitment required

- To be punctual to the Kid's Church on a Sunday
- Be present at the 4 leader's meetings throughout the year

Creche co-ordinator

Role description

The primary role of the Creche Coordinator is to create and coordinate a team of crèche helpers to support families attending one of the St Peter's services. This person aims to provide a safe, comfortable environment for children from 6 months to around 3 years of age.

Through participating in creche we hope children will get used to being involved in children's activities and be ready to commence more structured lessons as part of the Kid's Church program from 3 to 4 years of age, depending on their readiness.

The Creche Coordinator will recruit adults for this ministry in consultation with the Children's Ministry Leader to ensure the best use of resources are spread across the whole of the Children's ministry.

Role requirements

The Creche Co-ordinator will be a mature Christian who is of proven Christian character and conviction.

He/she will attend one of the St Peter's congregations.

He/she will need to submit to the leadership of Children's Ministry Leader.

He/she will need to have a WWCC and do safe ministry training.

Key responsibilities

- To pray for this ministry
- Co-ordinate a roster of helpers throughout the year in consultation with the Children's Ministry Leader
- Ensure that the helpers set-up and pack down the creche space
- Ensure a ration of a minimum of one adult to four children (Two of whom must be adults)

Guidelines

The coordinator will communicate these guidelines to all creche helpers:

- Caregivers should work in teams due to the high vulnerability and dependency of the age group
- A carer can seek to re-direct children's attention when upset or frustrated
- A carer can sit beside them to read a book or do an activity
- A carer should assist and encourage independence, as this shows love and concern
- A carer must realise that a young child has the right to refuse contact from an adult
- A carer will keep physical contact with a child brief when initiated by the child and redirect them

- Toileting and first aid should be done by parents or experienced female leaders where possible
- Appropriate physical contact includes:
 - rocking and talking in reassuring tones to comfort a child
 - sitting on a caregiver's lap to check for discomfort or ill health
 - patting the top of the child's back to reassure or praise
 - carrying for a short period to reassure if hurt or facilitate separation from a parent

Commitment required

- Assure the smooth running of the creche
- Communicate with the Children's Ministry Leader any concerns
- Preparation of craft activities or teaching material will be determined in consultation with The Children's Ministry Leader

Creche helper

Role description

The primary role of the crèche helper is to serve in a team of crèche helpers to support families attending St Peter's services. Helpers aim to provide a safe, comfortable environment for children from 6 months to around 3 years of age, and their parents.

Through participating in crèche we hope children will get used to being involved in children's activities and be ready to commence more structured lessons as part of the Kid's club program from 3 to 4 years of age, depending on their readiness.

The Crèche Coordinator is responsible for recruiting adults for this ministry in consultation with the Children's Ministry Leader. The Crèche Coordinator or Crèche Helpers are therefore not to appoint other crèche helpers independently of the Children's Ministry Leader.

Role requirements

The Crèche Co-ordinator will be a Christian of proven Christian character and conviction.

He/she will attend one of the St Peter's congregations.

He/she will need to submit to the leadership of Children's Ministry Leader.

He/she will need to have a WWCC and do safe ministry training.

Key responsibilities

- To pray for this ministry.
- Be on a roster of helpers.

- Set-up and pack down the crèche space.

Commitment required

- Assure the smooth running of the crèche.
- Communicate with the Children's Ministry Leader any concerns.
- No preparation is expected of teaching material or craft activities.

Parents and children at St Peter's

As we have seen above, the prime responsibility for the care of children has been given to parents (or primary care givers) in the Church family. As a result all those in the children's ministry team should seek to communicate as often as possible with the parents concerning how their children are going in our children's ministry. This will include communicating encouragement or what their child might have contributed in their group. If there are particular behavioural issues that need to be addressed for the sake of a child and the rest of the group, it is the Children's Ministry Leader who will do that in consultation with the parents and teacher. Teachers or helpers should not approach parents about significant and on going behavioural issues before discussing this with the Children's Ministry Leader first.

Those involved in children's ministry at St Peter's ought to consider the parents as being the experts in regards to the behaviour and issues their child might be facing. As a result the Children's Ministry Leader along with the teachers will seek to form a collaborative approach to helping any particular child to benefit from our children's ministry at St Peter's. Good channels of communication must be established between the Children's Ministry Leader, teachers and parents. This will involve but not be limited to:

- The Children's Ministry Leader and teachers being available for discussion with parents before and after Kid's Church each week whenever possible.
- The Children's Ministry Leader will also need to communicate to parents that he/she is available to discuss any matter concerning their child.
- The Children's Ministry Leader needs to be aware of the need for flexibility when dealing with children and their individual needs and not have rigid rules concerning which group they should attend.

Age appropriate ministry

At St Peter's we believe that all the Scriptures are God breathed and useful for teaching, reproof, for correction and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3.16). This applies to children as well as to adults. As a result we believe that every part of the Bible can be taught to children in ways that will be of benefit to them.

There are however issues relating to some stories and subjects which the Bible addresses which need care when teaching to children. The two outstanding issues revolve around:

- Certain descriptions of violence recounted in the Bible
- Certain descriptions or teaching on human sexuality as it relates to sinful behaviour

Violence

It is nigh impossible to teach children the heart of the Christian faith while avoiding the subject of violence! Jesus was unjustly and violently murdered in a barbaric way on the cross. Nevertheless we teach children that Jesus died for us and we can even say that he died at the hands of men who did evil and didn't love God. In other words, there are ways in which we can communicate the truth without focussing on the violence or the gore.

This is particularly true when it comes to books of the Bible where holy war is depicted, or when a psalmist expresses his desire for vengeance in seeing children dashed onto rocks or when certain scenes would be too graphic for little minds. There may come times when certain passages of the Bible are not read out loud but paraphrased by the teacher so that the lesson which comes from the passage is taught without the violence being focused on in detail.

For example, when Ehud the judge killed Eglon with a sword and Eglon's belly fat closed around the sword, a teacher can simply explain that "God's judge got rid of the evil man who was hurting God's people." The story doesn't lose its integrity, the whole Bible is taught and little children aren't unnecessarily drawn to an element they might find hard to process. Wisdom is required.

Likewise when God's people, again in the period of the conquest of the land, under God's instruction brought judgement in some cases killing all men, women and children in certain villages, the teacher can simply say that "God's people had to get rid of the people who were doing evil in that village." The point is made that God has brought judgement without focusing on the method of judgement.

In other words, teachers need to be aware of the ability of children to process events and descriptions like this which contain human violence. Teachers should steer children towards the main point of the passage and not let them dwell on the graphic descriptions, which adults can process more easily than children. What we don't want to do is 'censor' certain parts of the Bible as not being helpful to children, rather we want to teach them in appropriate ways.

Human sexuality

The subject of human sexuality and the teaching of children needs to be considered with wisdom as this subject may come up in certain Bible passages. On the one hand we want children to know that when a man and a woman come together in marriage they can make babies. We are talking about human sexuality here, but in a way which is appropriate for children to understand. Certain passages which may contain descriptions or teaching on rape, homosexual sex or adultery need to be treated with care in an age appropriate way.

In cases like this the teacher will not explain the act(s) involved but will rather say (example rape), “when that man or men hurt that woman” or (homosexual acts) “when those people were doing what was wrong in God’s eyes.”. The sexual details and content should be avoided and the general concepts of hurt and sin focused on.

More general teaching principles

Children in general develop from concrete thinkers to more abstract thinkers as they discover the world God has given us. When children are young, concrete facts are important to convey. As they grow older they start to incorporate these concrete facts into their thinking and start to extrapolate those facts into more complex patterns of thought - abstraction of thought develops, metaphor and symbolism starts to make sense. They start to be able to understand concepts which are less tangible.

For example, when Jesus says “I am the light of the world” this is an abstract concept. It may be a hard concept for a young child to grasp. They will tend to think in concrete terms of Jesus shining and bringing light on objects. It will only be later in the primary school years that the metaphors start to make sense. Kid’s Church Teachers need training to be able to teach in ways that make sense to children at their particular age so that the meaning of the passage can be grasped at their level of understanding.

- The teaching material used will often give a number of ways of teaching abstract concepts to children.
- If a teacher is struggling to teach certain hard concepts they should seek the help of the Children’s Ministry Leader.

Teaching children and the importance of fun

The aim of our children’s ministry in Kid’s Church is not simply to have fun, or let a child learn to socialise or to even allow them to discover their world. Our aim in our children’s ministry is to teach them about the Lord Jesus and to model what it means to be a Christian.

However, that being said, it would be a mistake to say to a child, “You are not here to have fun, but to learn!”. The same could be said for discovering things and learning to socialise. At St Peter’s we strive to teach the children about our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in ways that will help children and not hinder them in their learning. Having fun as they learn is an important element in teaching children. Just as adults need to learn in an environment which is interesting and engaging, so too children’s learning is facilitated in an environment which is fun and interesting. If children enjoy their class and activities a number of benefits flow on:

1. Perhaps without realising it the Kid’s Church teachers and helpers are ministering to the parents. How does this happen? A child who loves to come to Church is a child who will naturally encourage their parents to come to Church. This is particularly

beneficial for parents who are not yet Christian or who are new born Christians. Their children in their enthusiasm to come to Church help their parents to come to Church hear the word of truth and help them to integrate into Church life.

2. The second benefit relates to children communicating to their parents. If the children have been engaged in their learning and enjoyed it, they are very likely to speak the truth of what they have learnt to their parents. This can be a stimulus for the parents to learn themselves from the Bible or even be an encouragement to them.
3. The third benefit relates to their friends. A child who enjoys Church will naturally want to invite a friend to other Church activities, like our Holiday Kid's Club or perhaps even to Church itself. Children are naturally uninhibited in doing this and they give us the chance to share the love of God with others.

Perhaps there are other good reasons for ensuring that the environment in which children learn is fun, interesting and engaging. This requires thought, effort and a realisation on the part of the adults in the children's ministry of the importance of fun and interest. It can benefit greatly the growth of the gospel in the lives of others.

Teachers, helpers and Church participation

Ministering to children is an enormous privilege and of great value to our Lord. It is often an unseen ministry to many of the adults at Church and sometimes teachers and helpers don't get the encouragement and recognition which helps them to persevere in this ministry. At St Peter's we want to keep upholding just how vital children's ministry is. In this we need to think about the needs of our teachers and helpers. As they serve our children they do this in a sacrificial way. It takes time to prepare well and it also means that when they are rostered on to teach or help in a certain class, they don't receive the benefit of the preaching of God's word in Church. This is a concern for the staff at St Peter's and should be a concern for all our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must make sure that our teachers and helpers in the Children's ministry are fed spiritually themselves and supported so that they can go the distance in this ministry. What does this mean?

- The Children's Ministry Leader will seek to ensure that the teachers and helpers are regularly rostered off (A ratio of 3 to 1 is the ideal, 3 times in church to one time with the children) so as to be fed from the preaching of God's word.
- The teachers and helpers need to see this as important for themselves and also for their ministry to the children. They are modelling the importance of hearing and being fed from God's word. They will as a result seek to be part of a Growth Group.
- The Children's Ministry Leader conscious of this need, will work hard to recruit, train and support children's ministry workers to maintain a healthy balance in this area. He/she will in turn be supported by the senior minister in this.

Recruitment, appointment and training

At St Peter's we don't get any person who is willing to be involved in children's ministry onto the team. They must be the right people, the importance of this ministry dictates this. The criteria that is needed for Kid's Church Teachers, Kid's Church Helpers, Creche Coordinator or Creche Helpers are outlined in the various job descriptions for those roles so we won't go over that ground again here.

However, the importance of these positions has implications for our recruitment.

1. Firstly our wider Church body needs to understand the importance of this ministry and the responsibility a Kid's Church teacher or Kid's Church helper has.
2. As a result we do not ask for volunteers from the front for these positions. Rather, the Children's Ministry Leader in consultation with the staff team and in particular the senior minister, will recruit by personal invitation those who may serve in the children's ministry.
3. In the recruitment process, the Children's Ministry Leader can, a) Outline the vision for this ministry and its importance b) Explain that they have been asked in consultation with the staff team and the senior minister (This reinforces the importance of their role) c) Explain what is involved in the ministry, the requirements and commitment needed from the job description d) Allow the person to pray and consider this responsibility before replying.
4. If the person agrees to serve on the team, they are appointed by the leadership of St Peter's. This can be formally recognised at the beginning of each year in the congregation concerned as we pray for those involved in this ministry.

The Children's Ministry Leader, as team leader, will encourage and support that person, seek to train them and hold them accountable to the commitment they have made.

Behaviour management

In order for children to learn in a safe and helpful environment they need to be encouraged to behave in certain ways. Children who come from home environments which are sometimes dysfunctional, can nevertheless, in an environment of love and respect, learn the norms for behaviour in Kid's Church.

Certain behaviours which may be dangerous and disruptive need to be addressed in a collaborative way with the parents or primary care givers concerned. There should be an understanding that time is required for a child to understand what is expected and so patience is needed on the part of the children's ministry team.

When unhelpful ongoing behaviour is identified in a child, a loving, thought out and consistent approach is needed. This will be led by the Children's Ministry Leader and adhered to by the whole team. The Children's Ministry Leader will discuss the issue with

the teacher, work out a wise approach with the agreement and willingness of the parents (if needed), and communicate the approach that will be taken to all the teachers and helpers concerned.

Consistency in following through on the agreed approach is essential for a change in behaviour. Team members need to understand their role in being consistent in this. Teachers or helpers who are unwilling to follow the Children's Ministry Leader and the team approach adopted may need to step down from their role for a time. Their unwillingness to follow will only undermine the benefit to the group in the long run and send mixed messages to the child. These are matters that can be raised in the recruitment process.

Special needs

There are times when children have special needs that require care and ongoing planning and support. These needs can be physical, psychological or emotional. Our desire is for all children to be able to learn more about Jesus and grow in their knowledge of him. When transitioning children with special needs into Kid's Church programs it is essential to develop a transition plan in consultation with the parents and the Children's ministry leader, followed by regular communication with parents and teachers to ensure consistency and a positive experience. In this situation it is often helpful to have a 'support' helper to be with the child each week until they feel comfortable in the new environment. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis according to the needs of the child and the resources available at the time.

Children and conversion

God can work in the life of a child such that they are converted (Born again, born of the Spirit) even before they are able to make conscious choices, as a result the Lord can bring an infant to eternal life in the womb of his/her mother should he wish to. Conversion is always God's work in the heart of a person by his Spirit and we can't limit the timing of when God may regenerate a person or limit his power of conversion to human agency.

At St Peter's we believe that children are able to trust in Jesus as their personal saviour and king. Whenever a child expresses this trust we don't question the genuineness of their confession, rather we accept their expressed faith and nurture it. In certain churches, adults can sometimes treat children as little pagans who are not really converted until they make an adult confession, either as a teenager or adult, often coinciding with water baptism. The adverse affect of such an approach is to place a lot of emphasis on a conversion 'experience' which may or may not occur for a true believer. Christians can agonise in their teenage years on whether they are truly converted, looking to some intangible experience to validate their faith. Parents and grand parents can put pressure on them to get baptised and testify to their faith before the congregation. At St Peter's we place the emphasis, not on any particular conversion experience, but on believing in who Jesus is and what he has done, trusting him and living for him as king.

Baptism and children

Can we and do we baptise children and under what conditions? To answer that question we need to think about baptism more generally and what is necessary for it.

What is baptism?

Baptism is a sign or a seal. It neither confers God's grace, nor is it a precondition to receiving God's grace (his gift of salvation). Rather, baptism is a visible demonstration of faith in Jesus Christ – either that of the adult getting baptised or of the parents, godparents or primary care givers of the child getting baptised.

What Does Baptism Symbolise?

Baptism is closely linked to the idea of turning away from our old way and turning to God (which the Bible calls 'repentance'). The act of baptism symbolises the washing away of sin. This is another way of speaking about God's forgiveness. Baptism is therefore only meaningful where there is a genuine decision and desire to follow Jesus Christ. It is a commitment to following and serving him for the whole of our lives. Our Baptism service expresses the expectation that the person will "continue as Christ's faithful soldier and servant until their life's end."

What Does the 'Baptism' Do?

Water baptism itself does not "turn someone into a Christian". It is only a symbol in the same way that a wedding ring symbolises marriage. Baptism cannot make a person a Christian any more than putting on a wedding ring can make a person married. But it would be equally wrong to think that the 'baptism' had no meaning at all. Baptism reminds us of God's wonderful promises to forgive our sins and make us his children if we trust in Jesus Christ. These promises are publicly declared in the reading of Scripture and in the symbolic actions (like the washing with water) that takes place.

How can children be baptised if faith is necessary?

God's promises are not made only to individuals, they are made to families. So, for example, when the apostle Paul and his companion Silas were asked by a man: "What must I do to be saved?", they replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household." (Acts 16:31) Children are included with their parents in the promises of God. They may be baptised if they are part of a Christian family where one of the parents confesses faith in Christ. Children are baptised on the understanding that they will one day make their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The 'Baptism' therefore has a 'conditional' note. If children are to grow up to be Christians they need encouragement and teaching. The most significant influence will be parents (and god-parents) who have a genuine and active Christian faith of their own.

Who may be baptised?

Any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and has at least a basic understanding of the Christian faith may be baptised. In the case of children, it is the parents and god-parents who express this faith on behalf of the child. This is only

meaningful where at least one of the parents have a genuine faith in Christ themselves. Baptism for a child should not be sought if there is no faith seen in daily life and weekly service at church on the part of a parent.

Confirmation

In the Anglican Church, we confirm the faith of a teenager or adult should they ask for this. Confirmation is a public ceremony where a person can testify to their trust in Jesus as Lord and saviour before their brothers and sisters in Christ. It is done when the person was baptised as an infant or child and it allows them to take on for themselves the promises made on their behalf by their parents and godparents when they were a child. At St Peter's teenage or adult baptism does not need to be followed by confirmation at some later date as the same promises in essence are made.

Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry

At St Peter's we want to ensure a good transition of children into our youth ministry. To this end we:

- 1) Encourage those in year 6 to join our Friday night program
- 2) To be completed...

Children's literature

At St Peter's we want to read, approve and promote Christian literature which will help children grow in their faith in Jesus and help parents to fulfil their role in teaching their children. To this end, we don't sell or promote any or all children's books, CD, videos or other material. Rather we want to carefully review the material we sell and promote such that:

- 1) It is faithful to the Bible's teaching.
- 2) Is appropriate for Children.
- 3) Is presented in attractive and accessible ways.
- 4) Supports Christian ministries with which we have a theological affinity.

Peter's Kid's Church Teacher

Job Description and Commitment Agreement Form

We are so pleased that you have decided to be involved in ministry to children and youth at St Peter's. This ministry is an exciting and important part of our church and it is wonderful that you want to be involved in serving our church family in this way. At St Peter's we take the leadership of children and young people very seriously and it is important that leaders be above reproach in their whole lives, setting a biblical example to the children they teach.

This brief Job Description and Commitment Agreement gives you a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities. In signing this you accept the commitment you are making and are willing to be held accountable to it.

Job Description

The primary of a Kid's Church Teacher is to teach children, in a particular age group, the truth of the gospel of Jesus in a loving and godly way. Kid's Church teachers will be on a roster each term. It is expected they will be well prepared for lessons, collecting teaching material in advance and arriving on time for lessons. Teachers and helpers will be responsible for the safety and well-being of children under their care during the Kid's Church Program.

Teachers should discuss any welfare and behaviour issues with the Children's Ministry Leader directly after the lesson.

Personal Commitment

- I acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in my life and have a personal relationship with him
- I am committed to growing and maturing my relationship with God through personal bible reading, prayer and active attendance at church
- I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and 'above reproach', knowing that my lifestyle is a model for the children I lead
- I am committed to being a responsible leader, which includes being well prepared for Kid's Church lessons and always making the safety of the children in my care a priority

Ministry Commitment

I will:

- accept the leadership of the Children's Ministry Leader and submit myself to the leadership of St Peter's Anglican Church
- be an active/regular member of a St Peter's congregation
- be well prepared for Kid's Church lessons, arrive before the start of the service and pray regularly for those I lead
- give attention to those I lead during program time and inform the co-ordinator of any concerns
- be present at the 4 combined team meetings throughout the year

Safe Ministry Commitment

- I have completed a Working with Children Check and given documentation to the office
- I agree to complete Safe Ministry Training every 3 years
- I have read the Children's Ministry Handbook and agree to adhere to the above responsibilities and guidelines

Signed _____ Date _____

Peter's Kid's Church Helper

Job Description and Commitment Agreement Form

We are so pleased that you have decided to be involved in ministry to children and youth at St Peter's. This ministry is an exciting and important part of our church and it is wonderful that you want to be involved in serving our church family in this way.

This brief Job Description and Commitment Agreement gives you a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities. In signing this you accept the commitment you are making and are willing to be held accountable to it.

Job Description

Kid's Church helpers will be on a roster each term. It is expected they will arrive on time for lessons. A helper, under the guidance of the teacher, will assist in the safety and well-being of children under their care during the Kid's Church Program and help children where required during the lesson.

They should discuss any behaviour issues with the teacher.

Personal Commitment

- I acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in my life and have a personal relationship with him
- I am committed to growing and maturing my relationship with God through personal bible reading, prayer and active attendance at church
- I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and 'above reproach', knowing that my lifestyle is a model for the children I lead

Ministry Commitment

I will:

- accept the leadership of the Kid's Church Teacher and Children's Ministry Leader
- be an active/regular member of a St Peter's congregation
- be present at the 4 combined team meetings throughout the year

Safe Ministry Commitment

- I have completed a Working with Children Check and given documentation to the office
- I agree to complete Safe Ministry Training every 3 years
- I have read the Children's Ministry Handbook job description and agree to adhere to the above responsibilities and guidelines

Signed _____

Date _____

St Peter's Creche Co-ordinator

Job Description and Commitment Agreement Form

We are so pleased that you have decided to be involved in co-ordinating Creche at St Peter's. We take the care of all children very seriously and it important that leaders and helpers be above reproach in their whole lives, setting a biblical example to the children they care for. This brief Job Description and Commitment Agreement provides a clear outline of your role and responsibilities as a Creche Co-ordinator at St Peter's. In signing this Agreement you accept the commitment you are making and are willing to be held accountable to it.

Job Description and purpose of the Creche program

The primary role of a Creche Co-ordinator is to create and co-ordinate a team of Creche helpers to support families attending St Peter's services. This will involve co-ordinating a roster of helpers throughout the year, with a ratio of 1 adult to 4 children and ensuring that helpers set up and pack down the Creche space. The Creche Co-ordinator will recruit adults for this ministry in consultation with the Children's Ministry Leader to ensure resources are spread across the whole Children's ministry programs.

Through participating in Creche we hope children will get used to interacting with other children and adults and be ready to commence more structured lessons as part of the Kids Church program from 3 years of age, depending on their readiness. Given the young age and dependency of children attending Creche, parents are always welcome to be part of Creche.

Personal Commitment

- I acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in my life and have a personal relationship with him
- I am committed to growing and maturing my relationship with God through personal bible reading, prayer and active attendance at church
- I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and 'above reproach', knowing that my lifestyle is a model for the children I care for
- I am committed to making the safety of the children in my care a priority

Ministry Commitment

I will:

- accept the leadership of the Children's Ministry Leader and St Peter's Anglican Church
- be an active/regular member of a St Peter's congregation
- arrive on time for Creche and pray regularly for those I care for
- ensure the smooth running of Creche and inform the Children's Ministry Leader of any concerns from parents or Creche helpers
- determine any preparation of craft activities or teaching material for Creche in consultation with the Children's Ministry leader
- attend the 4 combined team meetings throughout the year

Safe Ministry Commitment

- I have completed a Working with Children Check and provided documentation to the church office
- I agree to complete Safe Ministry Training every 3 years
- I have read the Children's Ministry Handbook and agree to adhere to the responsibilities and guidelines outlined in this agreement

Signed _____

Date _____

St Peter's Creche Helper

Job Description and Commitment Agreement Form

We are so pleased that you have decided to be involved in helping with Creche at St Peter's. We take the care of all children very seriously and it important that leaders and helpers be above reproach in their whole lives, setting a biblical example to the children they care for. This brief Job Description and Commitment Agreement provides a clear outline of your role and responsibilities as a Creche helper at St Peter's. In signing this Agreement you accept the commitment you are making and are willing to be held accountable to it.

Job Description and purpose of the Creche program

The primary role of a Creche helper is to support families attending St Peter's services by providing a safe, comfortable environment for children from 6 months to around 3 years of age, and their parents. Through participating in Creche we hope children will get used to interacting with other children and adults and be ready to commence more structured lessons as part of the Kids Church program from 3 years of age, depending on their readiness. Given the young age and dependency of children attending Creche, parents are always welcome to be part of Creche.

Creche helpers will serve on their rostered weeks each term. It is expected they will help to set up and pack down the Creche space. Preparation of teaching material or craft activities is not an expectation. Helpers will be responsible for the safety and well-being of children under their care during the Creche time.

Personal Commitment

- I acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ in my life and have a personal relationship with him
- I am committed to growing and maturing my relationship with God through personal bible reading, prayer and active attendance at church
- I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both godly and 'above reproach', knowing that my lifestyle is a model for the children I care for
- I am committed to being a responsible helper, making the safety of the children in my care a priority

Ministry Commitment

I will:

- accept the leadership of the Children's Ministry Leader and St Peter's Anglican Church
- be an active/regular member of a St Peter's congregation
- arrive on time for Creche and pray regularly for those I care for
- give my full attention to those I care for during Creche time and inform the Creche co-ordinator of any concerns directly after the service
- attend the 4 combined team meetings throughout the year

Safe Ministry Commitment

- I have completed a Working with Children Check and provided documentation to the church office
- I agree to complete Safe Ministry Training every 3 years
- I have read the Creche Helper job description and agree to adhere to the responsibilities and guidelines outlined in this agreement

Signed _____

Date _____