

Metro Kids and Students Handbook

At Metropolitan Bible Church, we are thrilled by how God is working in and through the lives of all involved in our Metro Kids and Students Ministry and are so grateful for those currently serving and those whom God might be calling to serve in the future. In this handbook, you will find next steps for how to apply to serve, as well as expectations, policies, and procedures. Along with the information provided in this handbook, volunteers will receive a separate document detailing what our kids and student ministries are about, including their purposes, vision, goals, programs, and tips to be a better leader.

We take the safety of our kids and students very seriously and want to do everything we can to give them a safe environment to learn about the God who loves them and flourish in their relationships with Christ. The guidelines and policies in this book are intended to create a safe environment for both kids and to provide a supportive environment where volunteers can grow and utilize the gifts God has given them in ministry.

If you are interested in serving, please carefully read through the handbook and then follow the steps below to begin the application and training processes. This handbook will be updated every two years or as needed, and current volunteers will be contacted with updated information.

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Thank you for your partnership in ministry!

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Metro Kids and Students Handbook

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APPLICATION PROCESS

These nine safety steps apply to all volunteers before beginning to work with children and students. Forms are available at metropolitanbible.church/leaderresources.

Step One: Waiting Period – We ask that our volunteers be regular attendees at the church for three months before beginning to serve in the kids or student ministries.

Step Two: Fill out the Metro Kids and Students volunteer application.

Step Three: Have a face-to-face interview with either the Metro Students Pastor, Metro Kids Director, or Metro Kids Assistant.

Step Four: Authorize a background check. For all volunteers 18 and over, this request will be emailed to you after your application is turned in and to be updated every two years.

Step Five: Complete online Sexual Abuse Awareness Training. For all volunteers 18 and over, a link will be sent to you to complete through our ministry partner. To be redone every three years. For minors, a customized age-appropriate video will be provided.

Step Six: Annually sign the church Leadership Affirmation of Faith.

Step Seven: Annually sign the Metro Kids & Students Leadership Agreement affirming that you have read through and agree to follow the policies and instructions in this handbook.

Step Eight: Implementation into ministry.

Step Nine: Observation and a follow-up meeting during their first quarter of service. This will allow a ministry leader to encourage and provide future help and training as you begin to serve while enabling you to ask questions and offer fresh ideas.

We know this might seem like a lot of steps to get started, but we take very seriously our call to love and protect our kids, students, their families, and all those who serve here at Metropolitan. We believe this process will help protect those we serve and help you find, invest in, and excel in the ministries God is calling you into.

EXPECTATIONS

As those serving in the church, we want to hold ourselves to a high standard. Though we are all sinners, far from perfect, we strive to set a good example of following Jesus. So we might say, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 11:1, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”*

Walk with Jesus – We expect everyone serving in our kid and student ministries to have a relationship with Christ that they are actively seeking to grow in. And their life, both in the church and outside, will reflect this growing relationship.

Commit and Engage in the Church – We expect those who serve to be actively involved in church, regularly attend corporate worship, and be involved in a group for their growth.

Be Faithful, Available, and Teachable – All leaders, from the newest to the most seasoned, should always model these three attributes: being faithful to the group God has called them to serve. Being available to serve as they are called. And being teachable, always desiring to learn and grow in their faith, skills, and humility.

Care – We expect all who serve to care about those they serve. We don’t want a ministry filled with those simply plugging an empty hole but who will show all people they encounter God’s incredible love and care.

Prep – We expect those serving to be prepared to lead or teach in the ministries to which they are committed. We will also help by providing curriculum, tools, training, and support.

Build up and Challenge – We expect leaders to build up and challenge the kids they work with and the other adults they serve with. We will not tear down but will build up in love, have hard conversations when needed, and be a part of others’ growth and encouragement.

Appropriate Relationships – All leaders will model appropriate relationships with one another and with the kids and students they are working with. The policies below spell this out in detail.

Be Humble – Ministry is both incredibly rewarding and challenging. Choose to serve with a humble spirit, considering one another in all we do. Be open to conversation, correction, and encouragement.

Pray for the Team – Whatever role you serve in the kids or student ministries, you are joining a much larger team of people working together across many ministries, times, and years to help our kids grow into the people God has called them to be. So, resist the temptation to view your ministry as the only important influence in their lives. Instead, commit to praying for all those who do and will serve these kids and students you love.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

These policies, in addition to the sexual awareness training and yearly volunteer training, are designed to help prepare you to provide the best environment for spiritual growth and to intervene if any inappropriate or dangerous behavior occurs.

DEFINITIONS: It is important to understand the following definitions to understand the policies and procedures below fully.

- **A Child** – Anyone under the age of 18.
- **A Volunteer** – Anyone serving in a ministry, regardless of age.
- **Inappropriate Behavior** – As defined by the policies and procedures below and any action in detriment to a child’s development.
- **Abuse** – The harm or threatened harm to the health, safety, or welfare of another.
- **Harm** – Harm means any actual or threatened physical, mental, or emotional injury or damage to the body or mind that is not accidental, including but not limited to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect, or dependency.
- **Peer to Peer Abuse** – Harmful behavior between children involving an aggressor and a child who does not seek or want the interaction.
- **Sexual abuse** – Includes but is not limited to rape, incest, and lewd or indecent acts or proposals made to a child by an adult.
- **Sexual Exploitation** – Includes but is not limited to allowing, permitting, encouraging, filming, or forcing a child to engage in prostitution, lewd, obscene, or pornographic acts.
- **Sexual Assault** - Sexual contact or behavior that occurs between adults without explicit consent of the victim.
- **Physical Abuse** – An act where one person intentionally inflicts bodily harm on another.
- **Verbal Abuse** – The act of using words to assault, dominate, ridicule, manipulate, and/or degrade another person and negatively impact that person's psychological health.
- **Grooming** – Actions or behaviors to establish a relationship, emotional connection, and trust with a minor and/or their gatekeepers to gain access to abuse children.
- **Bullying** – Seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as vulnerable.
- **Incidents** - Incidents include not only abuse but also inappropriate behavior, policy violations, fights, accidental injuries, and other matters that require discipline.

We will take every step we can to be a place that prevents harm to a child. Statistically, 1 in 5 children will be sexually abused by the time they are 18, and one-third of the abusers are under 18 years old, so always be vigilant in your observation and adherence to policies.

SAFETY POLICIES: ABUSE

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Metropolitan supports and maintains a zero-tolerance policy against child abuse. We will neither condone nor tolerate the following:

- Infliction of bodily injury upon any child, including physical or sexually abusive behavior towards a child.
- Physical neglect of children, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to church activities.
- Emotional or mental mistreatment of children, including verbal abuse and/or attacks.

GROOMING BEHAVIORS

- We want to be ready to react when something goes wrong and to proactively protect kids from those who have ill intent towards them. As the Sexual Abuse Awareness training details, most abuse is committed by people you know and trust. This process of grooming kids for abuse is something we must constantly watch for; below are signs to be aware of.
 - Encouraging secrecy
 - Encouraging breaking the rules
 - Encouraging isolation from others
 - Pushing the boundaries of appropriate physical contact and conversation
 - Introducing inappropriate substances
 - Discussing inappropriate personal details

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

- Touch should always happen in the presence of other adults, in an observable area.
- Hugs can be an important part of a child's development. When you initiate a hug with a child, side hugs are recommended and should not persist longer than a few seconds. If a child initiates a front hug, do your best to get down on their level, affirm them verbally, and don't let the hug linger unnecessarily long.
- High fives, fist bumps, and pats on the back are generally acceptable.
- Appropriate touch from peers and adults can lead to healthy development and growth in children.
- Respect each kid's personal preference for touch. If a student is uncomfortable with one of the above appropriate expressions of touch, do not force it on them.

INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

- No one should touch a child in anger or disgust.
- No one should touch a child in any way that could be construed as sexually suggestive.
- No lap sitting for kids in Pre-Kindergarten and above, and approved lap sitting is for a short time to calm a child or care for them.
- Never touch a child for your own emotional or physical needs.
- Displays of romantic affection such as cuddling, kissing, or anything of a sexual nature should not occur between kids with their peers or kids and adults.
- Refrain from kissing kids of any age who are not your immediate family.
- No one should touch a kid's private areas with their body parts or objects, excluding diaper changing. If there is a medical need, a medical professional should be contacted.

BULLYING

- Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words, or more subtle actions.
- Behavior that infringes on the safety of any student or child will not be tolerated. A student, child, or adult shall not bully or intimidate anyone else through words or actions. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, direct physical contact, verbal assaults, the use of electronic methods, social isolation, or manipulation.
- When bullying is observed, take the following steps as detailed in the reporting and discipline sections, on pages 8-11.

SAFETY POLICIES: INCIDENT REPORTING

Every staff member and volunteer at Metropolitan is responsible to act in kids best interest and safety. If staff or volunteers observe inappropriate behavior, policy violations, suspected abuse, or potential grooming, they are responsible for immediately reporting these observations to the appropriate authorities.

WHAT TO REPORT

Report anything that violates the policies and procedures in this document, state law, threats made, or suspicious and concerning behavior. We know it may be hard to report behavior, especially when it is only suspicion, as you serve with incredible adults and kids whom you love, but truly, the most loving thing you can do is to report it.

HOW TO REPORT

Metropolitan is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children, their families, and volunteers. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and investigated per this policy and state law.

It is not your job as a volunteer to investigate the validity of suspicions or claims but to confidentially share what you have observed with the proper leadership so these concerns can be investigated appropriately. Here is our process for doing that.

1. If there is an active situation of inappropriate behavior, policy violations, or suspected abuse, step in to stop the behavior or immediately find someone who can.
2. Report the situation as soon as possible to either the Metro Kids Director, Metro Students Pastor, or any other staff member in their absence. If the concern is about one of these two, please report to the Senior Pastor and Chairman of the Elder Board.
 - a. We know there will be times when you cannot talk to these people immediately, but we request that when an incident has happened, you don't let the sun go down without reporting it. If you cannot have a face-to-face conversation or phone call that day, please use the incident report form and send a copy to your ministry leader before the end of the day.
 - b. We also urge you to resist the temptation to think this is a small incident and not worth wasting a leader's time on. Though you may have stepped in and stopped this incident and any future ones, it is important to communicate well and keep everyone informed.

3. If this is an incident of child abuse or suspected child abuse, you are required by law as a mandatory reporter to contact the state. In all cases where a person has reasonable cause, defined as a level of suspicion or evidence that a prudent person, exercising ordinary care and judgment, would consider valid and justifiable, to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is a victim of abuse or neglect, that individual is obligated to report such incidents to the local Child Protection Services (**1-800-522-3511**) or local police. When in doubt, report.
 - a. The report should be made that day, as soon as possible. There are penalties for failure to report, and the individual reporting the conduct is protected from legal and civil liability if the report is made in good faith.
 - b. The reporting obligations under this section are individual, and no employer, supervisor, or administrator of a person required to provide information pursuant to the law may discharge, discriminate, or retaliate against you in any manner.

INCIDENT REPORTING INVOLVING PEERS

1. Fill out an Incident Report form. This form is available online at metropolitanbible.church/incident-report and on the Metro Kids administration iPad.
2. When an incident or concern involving peers is reported to the Metro Kids Director, Metro Students Pastor, or any other staff member in their absence, they will do their best to collect further information from you, the reporter.
3. Parents/guardians will be notified of the incident following any required reporting. If a parent would like a summary of the incident report, one will be provided.
4. In addition to any external investigation, as needed, a staff member with elder oversight will lead an investigation of the incident.
5. As needed, ministry leaders will follow up with kids and their families to address the issue further.
6. Ministry leaders will also follow up with the reporter about the incident and advise of any additional concerns or adjustments needed in their ministry area.
7. The church will proactively take additional steps to protect all involved during the investigation and before any final resolution.
8. After resolution of the investigation, a completed incident report will be made available to all families involved.

INCIDENT REPORTING INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS

1. Fill out an Incident Report form. This form is available online at metropolitanbible.church/incident-report and on the Metro Kids administration iPad.
2. Report any incident or suspicion of inappropriate behavior, policy breaking, or abuse involving a volunteer to the Metro Kids Director, Metro Students Pastor, or any other staff member or elder in their absence. They will immediately step in and temporarily suspend that person from all activities with kids and students until an investigation can be completed and appropriate action is taken.
3. We have a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse, and those found to have committed abuse will be removed from serving in activities involving kids and students at Metropolitan.
4. Incidents involving other policy violations will require a meeting between the offending volunteer, their ministry leader, and other church leadership as needed. If a second incident occurs, there will be another meeting and a written warning; continued policy violations will lead to dismissal from serving.
5. Those found to violate policy are subject to suspension, removal from ministry, or other discipline and training to address the behavior.

LISTENING TO REPORTS OF ABUSE

When someone is reporting abuse to you, it is crucial to listen attentively and respond calmly. Recognize that individuals may initially share only partial disclosures as a way of gauging reactions to sensitive topics. Encourage further dialogue by asking open-ended questions like, is there anything else you'd like to share or what happened next? These inquiries can help individuals feel supported and validated in sharing their experiences. Avoid asking shaming questions that could cause them to shut down or feel ashamed of their situation. Instead, create a safe and non-judgmental space for them to express themselves. Remember to promptly report any abuse following established reporting protocols and principles. By taking swift action, you can help ensure the safety and well-being of those affected by abuse.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In the context of ministry, there will often be times when someone wants to share something with you but asks you for confidentiality. Our response to this request is that we will not share anything with others without your permission unless it includes behaviors or concerns of harm or danger towards yourself or others.

As our grooming section on page 6 addresses, secrecy is not a healthy behavior. All leaders should strive to help kids find appropriate help to deal with their problems and should not be the only ones they confide in. When in doubt, share this information with your ministry leader.

SAFETY POLICIES: DISCIPLINE

When working with kids, there will be times when discipline is necessary for both safety and the mission of the ministry. Below are things that should always happen and never happen.

ALWAYS:

- **Be Calm** – Always begin by calmly asking the child to stop the behavior.
- **Be Clear** – Be clear in your expectations and rules and don't be afraid to clarify.
- **Be Consistent** – Be consistent in holding to these expectations and rules.
- **Offer Correction** – Attempt to correct the inappropriate behavior, giving a chance for change when the safety of others is not at risk.
- **Change** - Change the environment to set up kids for success.
- **Contact** – Contact parents/guardians and let them know of the problems.
- **Remove if Needed** – If a child refuses to change their behavior and/or puts the safety of others in the group in danger, contact the parents and remove the child from this situation. Any time a child is removed, you should follow the above guidelines to report this incident to your ministry leader.

NEVER:

- **Act in Anger** – If you are angry, remove yourself from the situation until you can calm down or have another leader step in and handle the situation.
- **Yell** – Speak confidently but in control.
- **Be Physical** This includes punishments such as pushups, wall sits, or other exercise-related discipline and physical actions such as hitting, spanking, squeezing, grabbing, or any other action to cause pain or discomfort.
- **Threaten** – It is appropriate to let kids know the consequences of their actions but never to threaten them.
- **Humiliate** – Discipline should never be meant to embarrass or shame a child.

RESPONDING TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- **First Offense:** Issue a warning to the child(ren) and a reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is wrong. Do your best not to embarrass either the offender or the victim.
- **Second Offense:** Pull the offending child(ren) from the group and, along with another ministry leader, discuss the inappropriate behavior and set clear expectations and goals. The ministry leader should also evaluate whether the victim or the rest of the group is in danger of continued harassment.
- **Third Offense:** Remove the child and send them to the Metro Kids Director or Metro Students Pastor while their parents are contacted to come and pick them up. We never desire to have to remove a child, but we must remember that participation is a privilege and not a right.
- In all steps, please report the issue of bullying and inappropriate behavior through the incident form and allow for the investigation process to take place.

SAFETY POLICIES: INTERACTIONS**TWO LEADER POLICY**

When children attend activities sponsored by Metropolitan, at least two adult leaders who have gone through all the steps in this handbook must be present. Students under 18 do not count towards this total.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

In certain situations, you may need to have a one-on-one conversation with a child, but this always needs to be done in view of other adults and never alone in a room with a closed door. It is for your safety and the kids' to do your best to bring in or at least make another adult aware when these conversations are necessary.

VISIBILITY

It is important that all interactions between children and leaders happen in locations where others can observe what is going on for both safety and accountability purposes. Short of during an active intruder, there should never be a time when you are in a locked room with children, no matter the number of adults in the room.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting, not heated or argumentative. Words should always be used to be constructive and build up, not to shame or tear down.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTIONS

As adult volunteers, we encourage you not to be overly affectionate to the point of distraction or making others uncomfortable.

APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS

All conversations should be above reproach with an age-appropriate mindset. Leaders should not discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities. It is also important when kids share too much in a group setting to validate their questions and concerns while redirecting them to a more appropriate time and place to share with trained adults. Also, encourage kids to discuss these matters with their families and engage in meaningful conversation. Please see the kid and student-specific sections for more details on these conversations.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When conflicts arise, we must follow a biblical approach to work through problems and live peaceably with one another. Whether your conflict is with another volunteer, a leader, a parent, or a kid, we don't want to give a foothold to hatred, frustration, or distrust. So we ask that if you cannot forgive an offense and move forward in a joyful relationship with one another, please seek a biblical means of resolving this conflict. See the attached Conflict Resolution Road Map or one of many other great tools. Also, don't be afraid of seeking assistance from your ministry leader to find a resolution.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

Communication is a vital part of ministry and one we want to do well. We encourage you to have good lines of communication with other leaders, parents, and kids but make sure these are observable, appropriate, and uplifting.

- **Observable**—As we have mentioned many times, we do not want secrecy in our kid and student ministries. So, however you communicate, ensure it is observable and you have no issues with another leader, parent, or student observing it.
- **Appropriate** - As defined previously, be sure your comments are appropriate. If the other person's comments are not appropriate, find a ministry leader to help you navigate that situation.
- **Uplifting** - It can be hard to interpret tone and intention when communicating through written communication such as letters, emails, texting, and social media, so be sure communication is always uplifting and save matters of constructive criticism and conflict resolution for in-person conversations when possible.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please remember that your social media accounts are an extension of how people see and know you, so please refrain from posting anything inappropriate, hateful, or heretical on your personal or Metropolitan social media accounts.

SAFETY POLICIES: TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may, from time to time, be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when transporting children:

- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided.
- Drivers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Adults should avoid physical contact with children in vehicles.
- Drivers should remain focused on the road and not be distracted by devices or other activities in the vehicle.
- Students will not be permitted to transport other students without explicit permission from both the driver and passenger's parents/guardians.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Some of the most significant impacts in kids' lives happen when they are able to step away from their everyday activities to focus together on God and what He wants to do in their lives. These trips also require extra care to prevent incidents.

- **Leaders**—Every overnight trip requires a minimum of two screened adult leaders per gender. So, a co-ed trip requires a minimum of two male and two female leaders.
- **Sleeping**—Males and females will always be separated into different rooms or buildings for sleeping. Beds should not be shared between people, whether students or adults. If there are insufficient beds, other arrangements, such as cots or air mattresses, will be made.
- **Showering** - If there are multiple showers, each shower will be separated, and only one person will use each shower at a time. See the nudity policy below for more details.
- **Gender and Identity** - We affirm what Scripture teaches about gender and identity. From the beginning, all people are created in the image of God, as male or female. As we reach out and love students, we will encounter some who have or are transitioning or identifying as something other than their birth gender. In this case, we will meet with their parents/guardians to discuss the situation and decide what is the best approach for all involved while equally holding to unchanging truth and amazing grace.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. Equally, kids should not be nude in front of other peers or adults. In the event there is a situation that may call for or the possibility of nudity (i.e., changing clothes), there will be planned areas where kids and adults can change privately.

SAFETY POLICIES: PARENTS**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Parents have an open invitation to observe any program or activity in which their student is involved. However, parents must check in with the ministry leader and identify themselves. If they desire additional involvement or observation in their student's program, they will be required to complete the nine-step application process detailed above.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

We always strive to equip, support, and help parents be the spiritual leaders in their families. To this end, we will do our best to let parents know what their kids are studying throughout our ministries and, when possible, provide follow-up questions and/or ideas to further the conversation with their kids.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Metropolitan Bible Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a disciplinary problem.

SAFETY POLICIES: SUBSTANCES, MEDICATIONS, ALLERGIES**PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or any illegal drugs while in any Metropolitan Bible Church facility while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

TOBACCO USE

Metropolitan Bible church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from using or possessing tobacco products or vapes in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Metropolitan Bible Church activities or programs. Metropolitan Bible Church is a tobacco-free facility.

WEAPONS

No child will be allowed to carry or possess a weapon on Metropolitan's grounds or at ministry events. If one is found on a child, a leader will immediately request that it be surrendered and take it to the ministry leader. It will only be returned to the child's parent or guardian. If someone refuses to surrender the weapon, they will be escorted off the property.

Leaders are also prohibited from carrying weapons while serving in kid or student classrooms.

FOOD AND ALLERGIES

Parents are responsible for informing Metropolitan of their child's food allergies. As a leader, please be aware of allergies listed on a child's profile and/or name tag. Also, if you or anyone else is providing food, please confirm with your ministry leader to check on potential allergies before giving food.

SAFETY POLICIES: MEDICAL

While we make every effort to keep children safe, should an injury or sickness occur, all staff and volunteers should observe the following policies:

MEDICATIONS

No medication will be given to a child unless authorized by the parent/guardian. If a child needs additional medication, parents will be contacted for approval, or parents will administer the medication themselves. If a parent/guardian is unavailable and the situation is deemed necessary, appropriate medical personnel will be contacted. A staff or volunteer will dispense personal asthma inhalers and epi-pens in emergencies.

ILLNESS

A child who appears or has been ill in the preceding 24 hours should not be brought to any event. Children need to be free of fever, without fever-reducing medication, for 24 hours before coming into contact with other children. If a child has the following symptoms, please alert your direct supervisor, who will contact the parents.

- Common Cold
- Fever
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Symptoms of usual childhood diseases – scarlet fever, chicken pox, etc.
- Sore throat
- Croup or frequent cough
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection – boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye and other eye infections

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Please follow the following procedures if a medical emergency, such as the following occurs: loss of consciousness, no breathing, no pulse, or an injury with significant bleeding.

- People to be notified immediately:
 - 911, Direct supervisor, Parents, Security personnel
- Calmly remove other children from the area.
- An incident report must be completed.

INJURIES

Should an injury occur, please follow these procedures:

- Contact your direct supervisor.
- Parents will be notified, and depending on the severity of the injury, they will determine if security personnel and 911 need to be notified.
- An incident report must be completed for all injuries.

SAFETY POLICIES: EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Please note more details can be found in the kids and students sections specific to their areas.

FIRE

In case of fire, proceed to the exits. Parents must evacuate themselves first and then meet their kids at the designated Children's pick-up location. See pages 24-26 and 30 in the kids and students sections for the designated meet-up locations.

If you detect smoke and/or fire

- Activate the manual fire alarm.
- Initiate evacuation procedures. Details are shown in the kids and student sections on pages 24-26 and 30.
- Alert ministry leaders
- If you have access to and believe the best course of action is to attempt to extinguish the fire, locate an extinguisher, and, without risking injury, try to extinguish the fire.
- If the fire is beyond the point of a safe attempt to extinguish it, if safe to do so, isolate the fire by closing doors in the area as you evacuate.

If you hear the fire alarm sounding

- Ensure the evacuation path is clear and safe before initiating evacuation procedures.
- Initiative evacuation procedures. Use the primary exit route; if blocked, use an alternate route and lead to the designated gathering places.

SEVERE WEATHER

In cases of severe weather, the following procedures will be quickly followed:

- Developing Weather Risk - Before an event with looming weather, the call will be made by staff and elders to cancel, reschedule, or continue. This decision will be communicated to the church. Staff and elders will keep track of developing weather conditions, and if the need arises to suspend ongoing activities, the staff and elders will make those announcements to the church. This procedure will include but not be limited to thunderstorms, ice, snow, and tornados.
- Threat Level Weather - Please see the procedure above if the threatening weather starts before events. If the weather becomes quickly threatening, the following procedures will be followed:

TORNADOS

A *tornado watch* status indicates that weather conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes.

A *tornado warning* is an alert issued after a tornado has been detected by radar or sighted. A tornado can move at 25-40 miles per hour, so prompt emergency action must be taken.

During a tornado warning, the elders and staff will initiate the call for the following actions to protect children, volunteers, and staff.

- Stay calm and verify the number of people in your group to be sure everyone is there.
- Proceed to your safe zone. Details on pages 24-26, 30 in the kids and student sections.
- Once situated, teachers will take another head count to verify everyone is there.
- We highly encourage parents not to take their children during this time. Parents are welcome to stay with their children. Children will only be released if a parent arrives in person to pick them up. Once the elders or staff give the all-clear, we will release the children through standard pick-up procedures.
- Continue to shelter in place until the all clear is given, and you may return to classrooms.

EARTHQUAKES

- During an earthquake, move away from windows and outside walls.
- Do not use the elevator.
- If you are trapped, stay calm.
- Stop what you are doing, drop to the ground, and take cover under a sturdy desk, table, or other furniture, or along an inside wall.
- Protect your head and neck by placing your hands and arms on your head.
- After the earthquake, if able to safely evacuate, leave the building and meet at the group's gathering areas as defined on pages 24-26, 30 in the kids and student sections.

LOCKDOWNS

In the unfortunate event of an active shooter or dangerous individual on campus, the following lockdown procedures will be enforced.

- Individual classrooms will be locked until an all-clear is given by police officers or Metropolitan staff.
- Individuals in the classrooms should not panic but remain quiet and turn off lights.
- Other safety details are in place but not included in this written document due to their sensitive nature. Those serving in these areas will receive training on the exact steps in this situation.

METRO KIDS SPECIFIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In addition to the joint policies and procedures listed above, some specific policies related to working with infants through 5th graders are listed below.

ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- If you are scheduled to volunteer, it is your responsibility to decline the scheduled request to serve or notify the Metro Kids Director of your absence. After Friday, if you are unable to serve because of illness or an emergency, please call or text the Metro Kids Director directly.
- If you have special activities planned (e.g., crafts or object lessons) that require specific items, please email the Metro Kids Director at least two days before.
- Cell Phones should not become a distraction while serving in Metro Kids. If you need to attend to a situation that requires your attention, please have another adult leader cover for you while you step away.
- Personally obtained photos or videos of children are prohibited from being posted to social media sites unless they are of your own children. All other personally obtained photos/videos to be used or shared for official church use must be approved by the Metro Kids Director. This helps ensure the privacy and safety of our children.
- By participating in church events, you agree that Metropolitan Bible Church has permission to publish photographs/videos of your child(ren) in church digital and print communications. Metropolitan will never publish a child's full name or any other identifying personal information without express parental consent.
- Persons standing for prolonged periods at your classroom door to visit or chat are discouraged. Please alert the Metro Kids Director if they do not leave at your request.
- It is your responsibility to know how many kids are under your supervision at all times. Before leaving a location, count the number of children in your class and again when you arrive at your destination. To ensure the safety of the children while traveling, please have one volunteer at the front and one at the back of the line.
- Please encourage children to walk rather than run when inside the classroom or hallway.
- Sabbaticals are important to provide our volunteers with rest and rejuvenation, prevent burnout, and enable us to serve God and others more effectively. If you feel the need for a sabbatical, please contact the Metro Kids Director to discuss what that would look like for you and the ministry.

APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS

If kids bring up conversations that are not age-appropriate, leaders will inform kids that these questions are important but not fit for the classroom. These conversations can be held privately with the parents and the Metro Kids Director.

BUILDING SAFETY GUIDELINES

The Metro Kids Director, Assistant, or Front Desk Volunteer will ensure that the Metro Kids area is monitored during classes and programming. This will include checking on classrooms to ensure everything is running smoothly.

Children should always be supervised in the Metro Kids area and on the playground during ministry programming or classes. If a staff member or volunteer finds themselves alone with a single child, they will take the child to a room or building occupied by others or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

On the playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods and giving particular attention to areas that are not easily seen from all viewpoints (E.g., under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another, more open area of the playground.

WORKER-TO-CHILD RATIOS

Metropolitan Bible Church is committed to providing supervision in all Metro Kids Ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker-to-child ratios will be observed.

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	14
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
Kids Trips	2	20

If a worker is out of ratio, it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the Metro Kids Director, Assistant, or Front Desk Volunteer, who will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to bring the worker-to-child ratios into compliance with this policy.

OPENING A CLASSROOM

If you are the first volunteer or staff to enter a classroom, please follow these guidelines:

- Be in your classroom ready to receive kids at least 15 minutes prior to the start of an event. This includes having gathered any supplies you may need.
- Check your room to see if there are any safety issues or concerns.

ENTERING AN ESTABLISHED CLASSROOM

If you enter a classroom that already has a class in session, please follow these guidelines:

- Look at the check-in sheet to see if parents left any specific instructions.
- Ask existing teachers if there is anything you need to be aware of or to watch for.

CLOSING A CLASSROOM

If you are the last volunteer or staff in a classroom, it is your responsibility to prepare the classroom for the next class. Please follow these guidelines:

- Please wipe down all tables and chairs with wipes and stack chairs against the wall.
- Spray disinfectant on changing tables, bouncers, toys, and mats.
- Sweep the floor to remove any crumbs or debris.
- Remove trash from the classroom and bathroom and place it in the resource room trash.
- Report any maintenance needs to the Metro Kids Director.

TECHNOLOGY

We desire to limit distractions during ministry, and one of the largest distractors is electronic devices. We believe kids should not have devices out during ministry activities or in the classroom. If a child brings an electronic device and has it out during activities without permission from an adult leader, their device will be taken and securely stored until they are picked up. If they refuse to give up their device, parents will be contacted, and the child will wait with the Metro Kids Director until the parent arrives or convinces the child to relinquish it. If a child has a special need for a device, please talk with Metro Kids Director beforehand.

CHECK-IN AND PICKUP

Staff members and volunteers should act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

- Check-in begins 15 minutes prior to the start of an event, and dismissal is within 15 minutes of the conclusion of an event.
- Each child must be checked in at a check-in station.
- Parental contact information, including names and a mobile phone number, is required for every child.
- If a child is resistant to entering the room, ask parents if you can assist in the process. With their permission, you may help bring the child into the room.
- If a child arrives at the door without a proper check-in tag, please send them to a check-in station to complete the check-in process.
- Children will only be released to someone presenting their pick-up receipt. A leader should then check them out on the room tablet. Should the pick-up receipt be lost, contact the Metro Kids Director. You are not authorized to release a child to anyone without a pick-up receipt.
- Parents should not enter the classroom during check-in or pick-up time.

SUPERVISED ACTIVITIES

Adult supervision will be provided at all scheduled children's activities, including Sunday mornings from 9:15a to 12:05p and on Wednesday nights for Kids Choir from 5:45p to 6:30p and Awana from 6:15p to 8:05p, when kids have been dropped off in their appropriate areas, assuming church activities haven't been canceled. When kids are at church outside of these times and scheduled supervised activities, parents are responsible for the care and supervision of their children.

RESTROOM POLICY

Do not use or occupy a bathroom in use by children. Adults should use a separate restroom when children are present. No volunteer of any age should enter or occupy a bathroom while children are using it unless assisting the child, while leaving the the door partially open.

NURSERY CHILDREN

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies for newborns to the age of four. After the age of four, parents will be contacted to assist their children if a child is still in diapers.

DIAPERING

- Gloves should be worn during a diaper change and disposed of after each child.
- Changing diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- Children should always be supervised when on changing tables.
- Any special instructions given by parents for kids in the nursery will be recorded on the roster sheet (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”)
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- Children should be changed on changing stations only.
- The changing table should be wiped down with a wipe between each child.
- At least once during your volunteer shift, check each child’s diapers and change them when needed, such as if they are soiled or heavily wet. All diapers should be changed before the child is picked up for the day.

TOILET TRAINING (Toddlers to three years old - not fully toilet trained)

- No child will be forced to toilet train at Metropolitan.
- When children are taken into a bathroom, the door will be left partially open.
- It's essential to ensure young children are never left unattended in bathrooms for prolonged periods. While some children may be capable of managing their bathroom tasks independently, others may require additional assistance, particularly with toilet training.
- Parents should be consulted on the child’s progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded in the check-in book. (“Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”)
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- Please ensure the child flushes the toilet and washes their hands with soap.
- “Accidents” should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. If the parent has not furnished a clothing change, extra clothing and diapers are available in the resource room.

GRADES K-5

- If you must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another worker to accompany you. If no one is available in your room, ask the Front Desk Volunteer. If another worker is unavailable, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance.
- If a child requires immediate assistance in a restroom with stalls, leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his or her toileting activities while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with straightening or fastening garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.
- There should be only one child in the restroom at a time in a single-toilet facility. When a worker is assisting a child, the door must not be locked and must remain ajar. Children should generally receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based on their capabilities. Encourage children to do all they can for themselves.
- Kindergarten through 5th-grade students may go to single-use restrooms alone while the door to their classroom remains open and a leader stands at the door to the classroom or the front desk volunteer is in view of the restroom.
- Be aware if a student repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a ministry leader if it occurs.
- A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone child to the restroom.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of individuals with special needs. After the age of four, parents, legal guardians, or approved workers designated by the parents will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom, an approved volunteer may assist them in the restroom.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

LOST CHILD

If a child becomes missing, the following procedures should be followed:

- Alert the Metro Kids Director, Assistant, or Front Desk Volunteer.
- Classrooms, restrooms, and other recently utilized areas will be searched.
- If the child is not located during the initial search, parents, staff, available church leadership, and onsite security (if available) will be contacted. A systematic search of the entire building and exterior property will commence.
- The police will be contacted if the child is not located within a reasonable amount of time.

EMERGENCY GATHERING PLACES

- **Tornado Safe Place** - Upper Elementary Hallway.
- **Earthquake Safe Place** - Shelter in place until the earthquakes have passed and then go to the baseball field.
- **Fire Safe Place** - Make your way to the baseball fields.

CLASSROOM EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Each classroom will be outfitted with a backpack containing the following items: a small first aid kit, a red washrag for use in case of blood, and ice packs.

EVACUATION PROCEDURES

NURSERY (INFANT TO WALKING)

- Stay Calm
- Immediately verify the number of kids in the classroom and put all kids in the evacuation cribs. (1 crib/ 5 kids)
- Be sure to take the roster tablet and your emergency bag with you.
- Plan A: Use the East emergency exit door at the end of the hallway to the baseball fields.
- Plan B: Use the South door to the playground to the baseball fields.
- Once everyone is situated, teachers will take another head count and verify yours with the roster tablet.
- Once all kids are accounted for and after the all-clear is given, standard check-out procedures will be followed.

TODDLERS (WALKING TO 3 YEARS OLD-POTTY TRAINED)

- Stay Calm
- Immediately verify the number of kids in the classroom and put all kids in the evacuation cribs. (1 crib/5 kids)
- Be sure to take your roster tablet and your emergency bag with you.
- Plan A: Use the East emergency exit door at the end of the hallway to the baseball fields.

- Plan B: Use the South door to the playground to the baseball fields.
- Once everyone is situated, teachers will take another head count and verify yours with the roster tablet.
- Once all kids are accounted for and after the all-clear is given, standard check-out procedures will be followed.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN (3 YEARS OLD-POTTY TRAINED TO FIVE YEARS OLD)

- Stay Calm
- Immediately verify the number of kids in the classroom and have kids line up with ring rope.
- Be sure to take your roster tablet and emergency bag with you.
- Plan A: Use the East emergency exit door at the end of the hallway to the baseball fields.
- Plan B: Use the South door to the playground to the baseball fields.
- Once everyone is situated, teachers will take another head count and verify yours with the roster tablet.
- Once all kids are accounted for and after the all-clear is given, standard check-out procedures will be followed.

KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIFTH GRADE

- Stay Calm
- Immediately verify the number of kids in the classroom and have kids line up.
- Be sure to take your roster tablet and emergency bag with you.
- Plan A: Use the South door to the playground to the baseball fields.
- Plan B: Use the West exit door to the outside playground, proceed out of the playground, and head to the baseball fields.
- Once everyone is situated, teachers will take another head count and verify yours with the roster tablet.
- Once all kids are accounted for and after the all-clear is given, standard check-out procedures will be followed.

TORNADO AND SEVERE WEATHER

- Stay Calm
- Immediately verify the number of kids in the classroom and calmly evacuate your entire class in the upper elementary hallway.
- Take your roster tablet, emergency bag, and cell phone. Then, close the classroom door.
- Have children sit against the wall with their hands over their heads.
- Once everyone is situated, teachers will take another head count and verify yours with the roster tablet.

- We highly encourage parents not to take their children during this time. Parents are welcome to stay with/near their children, but releasing them could be dangerous. Once the elders give the all-clear, we will release the children through normal pick-up procedures.
- Continue to shelter in place until the all clear is given, and you may return kids will return to classrooms.

LOCKDOWNS

In the unfortunate event of an active shooter or dangerous individual on campus, the following lockdown procedures will be enforced.

- The Metro Kids Director and/or Assistant will lock all doors, starting with the double doors in the hallways, proceed to each classroom, and notify the leaders.
- If a group of kids is in the indoor playground, Plan A: Get the kids within the double doors and lock them. Plan B: If the kids can not get to the hallway safely, the kids will be taken into the bathroom in the indoor playground, and the leader will take the key on the hook and lock all inside doors.
- Classrooms with windows have the following additional procedures.
- Leaders and children will move away from doors and windows, turn off lights, keep children silent, and wait until the all-clear is given.
- No one, even parents, will be allowed to enter the children's area until the police officers or the staff give the all-clear.
- Classrooms will be unlocked when the danger has passed.
- Due to their sensitive nature, other procedures are in place but will not be included in this document. Please contact the Metro Kids Director if you have any questions.
- This emergency action plan cannot cover every possible situation. However, if implemented as soon as a situation develops, it can help reduce the number of injuries or deaths. Time is a critical factor in managing a situation in this manner.

WARNING SIGNS

It must be stressed that if you have contact with individuals during ministry who display the following tendencies, notify your ministry leader.

- Threatens harm or talks about killing others.
- Constantly starts or participates in fights.
- Loses temper and self-control easily.
- Swears or uses vulgar language often.
- Creates artwork that depicts graphic images of death or violence.
- Frequently initiates violence.
- Becomes frustrated easily and converts frustration into uncontrollable physical violence.

PARENTS AND STUDENTS SERVING**METRO KIDS ADVISORY TEAM**

The Metro Kids Advisory Team is open to anyone in the church who would like to serve by collaborating with the Metro Kids Director to offer valuable insights, perspectives, and feedback on programs and ministries. We hope this team will be full of parents, leaders, and others in the church who will serve to bring fresh ideas and a broader perspective to our Metro Kids Ministry. This team will meet at least four times a year beginning in August. Please contact the Metro Kids Director if you are interested in serving or finding out more information.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- All students serving in regular Wednesday and Sunday Metro Kids ministries need to be in the 7th grade or above.
 - 6th graders will have opportunities to serve in events like VBS, Fall Festival, and other special programs.
- All students must go through the application and interview process before serving.
- Students will not count toward the two adult rule per classroom.
- We want all students serving to have a great experience where they are both challenged to step up as leaders and supported by the adults they are serving with.
- We strongly encourage students to have a place where they can be fed with and by their peers. Spiritual growth within a peer context is incredibly important and one of the greatest mission fields our students have access to in their lifetimes.

METRO STUDENTS SPECIFIC POLICIES:

In addition to the joint policies and procedures listed above, there are a few specific policies related to working with 6th-12th grade students, as listed below.

SUPERVISED ACTIVITIES

Adult supervision will be provided at all scheduled student activities, including Sunday mornings from 10:45a to 12:05p and Wednesday nights from 6:15p to 8:15p, when kids have been dropped off in their appropriate areas, assuming church activities haven't been canceled. When kids are at church outside of these times and scheduled supervised activities, parents are responsible for the care and supervision of their children.

BATHROOM POLICY

Students should do their best to visit the restroom before activities or ministries begin. If a student repeatedly leaves to use the restroom or stays there for unusual periods, volunteers should knock on the bathroom door and ask if they are okay. If they need assistance or are not responding, grab another adult before entering the bathroom. If they frequently leave to go to the bathroom, have a conversation with your ministry leader and parents about ways to keep them engaged or to understand any additional physical needs.

When students are off church grounds in a public setting and need to use a multi-person public restroom, strive to send three or more students together.

RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to following all the steps outlined above, no volunteer may pursue or be in a romantic or sexual relationship with a 6th-12th grade student. If feelings develop for a student or if a student develops feelings for you, immediately meet with the Student Ministries Pastor to discuss the situation.

APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS

It is expected that at planned intervals, age-appropriate discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the students the church's views on what Scripture teaches about these topics at an age-appropriate level. We will communicate with parents before planned discussions and lessons and respect each family's choice of whether to have their kids involved in these opportunities.

In addition, all students and leaders should use appropriate language and refrain from any crude talk, sexual jokes, racist comments, innuendo, or other derogatory comments.

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

Each classroom will be outfitted with a small first aid kit, a folder with incident forms, bibles, pens, and dry-erase markers. If you need additional supplies for your room, please notify the Student Ministries Pastor.

SWIMWEAR

When students wear swimwear at a church-sponsored event, all students should wear shorts. In addition, girls can wear a one-piece, tankini, or dark-colored shirt over a swimsuit. Uncovered bikinis and speedos are not allowed. If someone's swimsuit is deemed inappropriate, a same-sex leader will respectfully and without public embarrassment let them know and give them the option to change or put on a provided shirt. We will have extra t-shirts available for use at all pool parties.

ELECTRONICS

When it comes to phones and other electronics, we ask students to be above reproach in their usage as well as not allow it to distract them or others. We believe our students should not have devices out in the classroom without permission from an adult leader. This includes but is not limited to phones, earphones, cameras, tablets, computers and gaming devices. We realize many students utilize their phones or tablets to read their Bibles and journal, but in the group setting, to limit distractions, we will have them use either their physical copy of the Bible or a provided one.

If they do pull out their device without permission, they will be warned once to put it away. If it continues to come out, it will be taken and securely stored until the end of the class or when they are picked up. If they refuse to give up their device, please contact their ministry leader and have their parent/guardian come pick them up.

If a parent needs to contact their child, they can always contact the Metro Students Pastor or direct ministry leader. If a child has a special need for a device, please talk with the Metro Students Pastor ahead of time.

On most student ministry trips, students will be allowed to use their phones and other electronic devices on the way to and from the event/activity but will surrender their devices for the time of the stay. As always, students can use an adult leader's phone to contact their parents if any need arises, and equally, parents can reach their students by contacting their leaders. This disconnecting from technology and many of the distractions at home is a huge motivator to fully engage and grow.

SPECIAL NEEDS

We desire to do our best to minister to every student who engages with our ministries. And we know some students will come with special mental, physical, and emotional needs. We ask that parents/guardians of students with special needs contact the Metro Students Pastor to discuss these needs and how our ministry can best prepare to make this a place where your student can thrive and grow in a relationship with Jesus in a loving community.

STUDENTS SERVING

We believe that our students can and should engage in serving throughout the church. We invite all our students to serve in a variety of ministries, including but not limited to Tech, First Impressions, Worship, Big/Little, Encouragement, Kids Ministry, Guys Ministry, Girls Ministry, Prayer, and Teaching. One of our core values is that we not simply do ministry for students but with them.

METRO STUDENTS ADVISORY TEAM

The Metro Students Advisory Team is open to anyone in the church who would like to serve by collaborating with the Metro Students Pastor and other adults to offer valuable insights, perspectives, and feedback on programs and ministries. We hope this team will be full of parents, leaders, and others in the church who will bring fresh ideas and a broader perspective to our Metro Students ministry. This team will meet at least four times a year beginning in August. Please contact the Metro Students Pastor if you are interested in serving or for more information.

EMERGENCY GATHERING PLACES

In case of an emergency, please follow the general emergency guidelines and the student-specific gathering places below. These places are designed to be the easiest to get to based on where students are located and allow parents to find them easily after an emergency. Details of each plan are posted on classroom walls.

- **Tornado Safe Place** - Bathrooms off of the gym.
- **Earthquake Safe Place** - Shelter in place until the threat has passed, and then go to the baseball fields.
- **Fire Safe Place** - Go to the baseball fields by going down either the rear fire escapes or front stairwells; do not use elevators.
- **Lockdowns** - In the unfortunate event of an active shooter or dangerous individual on campus, the following lockdown procedures will be enforced.
 - As soon as leaders are notified or if you hear something that causes concern, the leader should pull the magnetic strip off the door, enabling the lock.
 - If in the student worship room, turn the deadbolt lock.
 - If in a common area without a lockable door or outside, please quickly move to the closest classroom and lock the door.
 - Continue to shelter in place, with the lights off, keeping silent until the all clear.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION ROAD MAP

**AM I IN
CONFLICT?**
Romans 12:18

**CAN I
OVERLOOK IT?**
Proverbs 19:11

**WHAT IS MY
PART TO OWN?**
Matthew 7:3-5

**HOW CAN I SEEK
RECONCILIATION?**
Matthew 18:15-17

How to determine if you're in conflict:

- Has someone sinned against me? Have I sinned against someone? (Matt. 5:23-24)
- Has someone broken my trust in them?
- Have I spoken poorly about someone? (Prov. 26:20)
- Am I imagining payback, revenge, or justice? (Rom. 12:19-20)
- Am I actively avoiding someone?

Can you try to privately overlook the offense, make allowance for faults, forgive, and move on? (Eph. 4:1-6, Col. 3:12-13)

When to NOT overlook an offense:

- If the offense dishonors God (Rom. 2:23-24)
- If the offense broke a relationship (Prov. 18:19)
- If the offense is hurting others (Phil. 2:4)
- If the offense is hurting the offender (Jas. 5:19-20)

Recognize that blame rarely lies 100% with any single party. (Gal. 6:3-4)

- What of your actions – however big or small – have contributed to this conflict?
- When apologizing, do so thoroughly. See reverse side for navigating an apology.

Gently point out another's part in the conflict and try to make amends. (Gal. 6:1-2)

- First, talk in private, one-on-one.
- If they don't listen and repent, try again with one or two others.
- If they don't listen and repent, try again with a group from the church.
- If they don't listen and repent, remove them from the fellowship of church membership.
- If at any point they listen and repent, forgive. (Col. 3:12-13)

NAVIGATING AN APOLOGY

- 1. ADMIT WHAT YOU DID WRONG.**
Acknowledge the harm you caused without justifying or downplaying your actions. Express empathy for how your actions might have made them feel.
- 2. APOLOGIZE.**
Tell them you are sorry for what you did. Be specific.
- 3. ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.**
Say the words, "Will you forgive me?"
- 4. ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES.**
Do what you can to make it right and alter your behavior. You are not truly sorry if you continue causing harm.

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." **John 13:35**

FORGIVENESS IS NOT...

- 1. EXCUSING.**
There is no excuse for sin. God will make sure all sin is paid for.
- 2. DENIAL.**
Do not pretend you are not hurt. Honestly bring your pain to God.
- 3. FEELING.**
Forgiveness is a decision you can make no matter how you feel.
- 4. FORGETTING.**
To forgive you must remember the offense, God's justice, the cross, and God forgiving you.
- 5. TRUST.**
Forgiveness is a gift, but trust must be earned.
- 6. OPTIONAL.**
God commands us to forgive. Refusing to forgive is rebelling against God.
- 7. RECONCILIATION.**
Reconciliation takes action from both sides; forgiveness is between you and God.