

The C.I.T.Y. Children's and Teens Ministry

Family Handbook



Children's and Teens Ministry

Welcome to the C.I.T.Y. Children's & Teens Ministry!

We're so excited to partner with you in the spiritual formation of your children. This handbook is designed to provide you with the information you need to understand our ministry, our policies, and how we work together to support your child's growth and development.

Our youth ministry is defined as an age-specific religious ministry with the objective of creating a space to actively engage youth to be active members of their ministry and community, while also cultivating their growth by providing support, guidance, and encouragement.

The NMZ Youth Ministry consists of youths from preschool to high school and is divided into the following groups:

Children's Ministry

- **Preschool - (Toddlers to Pre-K)**
- **Elementary – (Kindergarten to 4th Grade)**

Teens Ministry

- **Preteens - (5th - 7th Grades)**
- **Teens - (8th - 12th Grades)**

Each group has a minimum of two youth leaders. Youth activities are structured and planned based on these groups, though there may be combined youth activities for all ages.

Our Ministry Environments

We offer five kinds of environments designed to invite youth and families into deeper relationships with their peers, our adult volunteers, and Jesus.

- **Events:** Throughout the year, we host events to help youth connect with their peers, families, and small group leaders. These events are often a youth's first experience with our ministry.
- **Activities/Programs:** Youth leaders may lead their age groups in specialized activities to help them grow spiritually, such as Bible reading or journaling.
- **Small Groups:** For teens, small groups are a key part of our ministry, providing teaching and mentorship. They are designed to connect every youth with a consistent, trustworthy adult and a community of their peers.
- **Youth Empowerment Service (YEWS):** A youth-focused worship service held on the fourth Sunday of each month. It's designed to help youth engage in worship and respond to God.
- **Other Ministries:** We offer a variety of ministries to support the diverse needs and interests of our youth, including the Usher Boards, Levitical Dance Ministry, and Young People and Children's Division (YPD).

Fostering a Partnership with Parents and Guardians

We believe that parents are the primary spiritual leaders in their children's lives, and our role is to support you. Here are some of the ways we aim to partner with you:

- **Establish Open Communication:** We are approachable and available to listen to your concerns, answer questions, and collaborate for the benefit of your children. We also provide regular updates through emails, newsletters, or group chats. We encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas to ensure your voice is heard.
- **Build Trust:** We maintain transparency about our policies and safety procedures and respect confidentiality.
- **Partner with You:** We may share resources like devotionals or books to help you foster faith at home. We also invite you to volunteer, chaperone events, or contribute your skills to the ministry.

Safety and Security

The safety and well-being of your child(ren) are our highest priority. We have established clear guidelines and procedures to ensure a safe environment for everyone.

Volunteer Requirements

All youth ministry volunteers undergo a process that includes a volunteer application, criminal background checks, and a "C.I.T.Y. Chat" interview with a ministry staff leader. They are also required to complete Child Safety Training provided by Protect My Ministry.

General Safety Guidelines

- **Two-Adult Rule:** No volunteer should ever be alone with a youth at any time. A minimum of two volunteers will always be in a room with children.
- **Incident Reporting:** If a child is injured, falls ill, or an incident occurs, a staff member will complete an incident report and notify the child's parents.
- **Appropriate Touch:** We have strict guidelines for physical affection, which include brief, side hugs and handshakes. Holding children is limited to those under two years of age unless they are being transported.
- **Communication:** We ask that volunteers do not initiate conversations with youth via text or call between 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. We will not engage in one-on-one messaging with minors on social media without prior parental consent.

Emergency Procedures

- **First Aid:** A fully equipped first aid kit is on-site at all activities. In case of a serious injury, 911 will be contacted, and parents will be notified immediately.
- **Fire:** In the event of a fire, youth will be calmly led out of the building to a designated meeting point in one of two parking lots, where parents can pick them up.

- **Tornadoes/Severe Weather:** Youth will be escorted to an enclosed part of the building, away from windows.
- **Intruder:** In case of an intruder, 911 will be called immediately. Youth will be escorted to the closest safe, locked area or led out of the building. For safety, youth will not be released to parents until the area is cleared by law enforcement.

Data Privacy Policy

At New Mount Zion, we are committed to protecting the privacy of personal information we collect from minors and their parents or guardians. This policy aligns with relevant privacy laws, including the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- **Data Collection:** We collect personal information, such as name, age, address, and phone number, as well as health information, including emergency contacts and allergies, to ensure the safety of participants. We only collect the data necessary for ministry activities and events. Data is collected directly from you and your child via digital registration forms, permission slips, and sign-up sheets.
- **Parental Consent:** We require written or digital parental consent before collecting or using any personal data for minors under 18. We provide clear information about what data is being collected and why. You have the right to withdraw your consent and request the deletion or correction of your child's data at any time by contacting us.
- **Data Use and Security:** The data we collect is used to manage ministry activities, communicate with families, and ensure the safety of participants. We do not sell or rent personal data to third parties for marketing purposes. Access to digital records is password-protected and restricted to authorized personnel only.
- **Data Sharing:** We only share information with authorized staff or volunteers who need it for operational purposes, in emergency situations, or when required by law enforcement.
- **Data Breaches:** In the unlikely event of a data breach, we will notify parents and guardians as soon as possible and take immediate action to secure the data.
- **Communication:** We will keep you informed about how your data is used and will notify you of any policy changes. We communicate primarily through email, event registration confirmations, and text messages for urgent updates. We do not use one-on-one messaging with minors without prior parental consent.

Discipline Policies

Discipline is handled in a positive, patient, and grace-filled way, focusing on helping the youth rather than punishment. We never use physical discipline or belittle a youth. Our three-step process is:

1. **Redirect:** A verbal warning is given to the youth, explaining why the behavior is not acceptable.
2. **Remove:** If the behavior continues, the youth may be removed from the situation to calm down.

3. **Refer:** If a youth is still not obeying, they will be referred to a ministry leader for assistance.

If disciplinary action is taken, we will always communicate with you in an encouraging, gentle, and positive way.

Registration and Communication

Youth Registration

Youth registration is a mandatory requirement to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of every participant. It allows us to collect vital information, including emergency contacts and medical details. All registration forms are maintained in a secure church database accessible only to the Leadership Team and Youth Leaders.

Check-in and Check-out Procedures

To ensure your child's safety, we ask that you adhere to the following procedures:

- **Check-In:** All participants must be checked in at the designated area, providing the child's full name and necessary contact information.
- **Check-Out:** Participants will only be released to individuals listed as authorized for pick-up on the registration form. A government-issued ID may be required for verification.

We are committed to creating a safe and spiritually enriching environment for your children. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Pastor Mike Bell and the NMZ Youth Ministry Leadership Team

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Please visit our website for more information

