



Union Kids Handbook

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Union Kids | Vision

Union Kids Ministry exists to come alongside families with help and support as they follow Jesus with their kids. Our desire is for kids to know God and His story and help them find their place in that story.

Union Kids | Values

1. **Love:** every child, every week should leave their classes knowing that Jesus loves them and knowing their teachers and leaders love them. We want to make meaningful connections, understanding relationships & gospel transformation takes time.
2. **Instruction:** Our curriculum is Gospel Project. We teach, instruct, and engage kids in ways that are meaningful and age appropriate. We emphasize and value the Bible—not just as stories or morals but as the Good News about Jesus. Leaders are responsible to read the lesson plan each week and come prepared to lead the lesson they have been assigned. For the younger classes, we have a blessing that we pray over the kids each week and sing songs of praise as a way for them to encounter God and experience truth.
3. **Safety:** Every leader is required to pass a background check as well as have an orientation conversation with one of the Union Kids Directors. Leaders are required to do all that they can to create a safe environment in their classroom. This means showing up consistently, engaging with kids, following all guidelines and practices and staying off of their phones and other devices. We want families feeling comfortable having their children in our care.
4. **Fun:** Kids learn through play, so we make it our goal to create fun, age appropriate classrooms experiences each and every week as well as varying our storytelling styles so that kids learn in a variety of ways. We want kids excited to come and learn about Jesus.
 - We host regular Pizza Parties for kids and families and a yearly family Pool Party that leaders are invited to attend. We use these times to create a safe third space for kids and leaders to interact.

Union Kids | Why

“Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matthew 19:13-14

We see from Matthew 19:13-14 that Jesus loves kids. The reason we invest so much in kids at Union Church is because Jesus had a high value of kids and we want to model that same value to our families and to our city. We want these kids to grow up knowing God, not just knowing Bible stories, and we do that through making time each week to let the children be with Jesus. Because kids are at the center of Jesus’ Kingdom plans, we believe He sees value in kids being with other kids, in teaching them, in loving them and protecting them and we have adapted these values as the core of Union Kids.

It is unfortunately common for churches to send their kids to a room to entertain them while the adults “go to church.” At Union Church, we think there is a missed opportunity if this is all that a church does with their kids. So, if we can, at an early age, introduce them to the power of the gospel and what it means to follow him, we will better equip them for life and for the road towards adulthood.

We believe that by taking our call to educate and equip kids seriously, we can have a huge impact on the way the city of Prescott and the greater Prescott area sees and engages with Jesus. These kids are the future leaders of the church and Jesus has given us the responsibility of pouring into them, loving them, affirming them, and preparing them to be the Church.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we read: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.”**

Church gatherings are not a substitute, but an additional support system for growing faith in daily life. According to the Bible, parents have the primary responsibility for teaching their children about God. It is an all-of-life project. His word and ways must be prominent in our conversation and daily life with our kids. The leadership of Union Church recognizes that we have a responsibility as the church to walk alongside parents as they train their children in godliness. We want to equip parents to pray and plan for the spiritual development of their kids. We hope that our ministry to children serves to reinforce the teaching of our parents and families.

Please feel free to reach-out to Union Church leadership if there are any specific ways we can serve and assist you along your journey of parenting.

Union Kids | How

How can you get involved in Union Kids?

Step 1: Fill out the application form (available at the Union Kids check-in area)

Step 2: Paperwork is processed, references are checked, and background check is run

Step 3: Someone from the Union Kids team will be in touch with you and let you know when everything has been processed and give you your start date.

Step 4: We set-up your Planning Center Check-in account

Step 5: Receive volunteer schedule

Step 6: Start serving/leading in your classroom when scheduled

Union Kids | Guidelines & Practices

We want the Union Kids leaders and volunteers to be able to exercise their God given creativity and help us create an environment where every child can have a personal encounter with the Living God. We rely heavily on our leaders to create an environment that encourages learning, safety and having fun. Leaders have a lot of freedom to make this happen in unique and creative ways, however, we do have some rules and policies that we have put in place to ensure the safety of each child. In addition to volunteer involvement, the cooperation of parents is essential in the success of our time together. Please read carefully through these considerations and requirements.

Considerations for Parents:

Please pick up your child promptly after the worship gathering.

If for any reason, you are needed during gathering, your child's check-in ID number will be presented on the screen in the auditorium to notify you that you are needed. Only parents, legal guardians, or individuals they designate may retrieve a child from the children's ministry area. Parents must present the appropriate claim tag before their child will be released.

Please bring only plastic bottles or cups for milk, juice, or water. Parents and guardians should label all items (such as bottles, cups, diaper bags, wipe containers, clothing, pacifiers, etc.) with their child's first and last name. We have labels available for your use.

Parents and guardians should notify coordinators and teachers of any allergy or special circumstances their child may have.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to keep children's immunizations up-to-date and comply with the sickness policy (Pg 7-8).

Considerations for Volunteers:

The Bible shows Jesus as a passionate protector and defender of children. We live in a world plagued by perversity and abuse and we have a responsibility to do everything we can to protect these kids that are entrusted to our care.

Additionally, we need to make sure that our Kids Leaders are living lives that are leading them closer towards Jesus so that they can lead these kids towards Jesus. We ask that our leaders are all pursuing lives of Christlikeness, submitting the entirety of their lives to Him, and leading kids towards Jesus as they are being led themselves. Kids in your class will look up to you and try to become like you, so take extreme care that your life is constantly pointing to Jesus so that as these kids follow you, they are being led closer to King Jesus.

We recognize that our best leaders are not simply the most skilled with kids, but the ones who are faithful. The Faithfulness Principle means they show up and do what they said they would do consistently over a long period of time, they stay loyal and steadfast to God's word and truth instead of camping on their own opinions, and they show consistent love to kids by showing up each week and becoming a predictable part of their lives. We encourage all leaders to live into the Faithfulness Principle to the best of their ability.

Please show-up at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the gathering to be available for parents to drop-off. Please stay afterwards until all kids have been picked-up to ensure there are two leaders present at all times.

General Safety Procedures:

Two-Leader Rule

In every classroom a minimum of two leaders must be present at all times. At least one of those leaders must be over 18 years of age and at no time should a leader be alone with a child. If a leader is discovered to be alone with a child they will be dismissed from working with Union Kids. There are three purposes for the two-adult rule:

1. It protects the child from any possibility of abuse.
2. It protects the adult from any possibility of a false accusation.
3. It ensures that, in the case of an emergency, there will always be one adult to watch the kids, and one adult to call for help.

If there are only two leaders present in your class and someone needs to step-out momentarily, please let the Kid's Host know so they can step into the classroom while you're away. *Under no circumstances is a child to be left in a classroom or anywhere unattended. A parent or guardian must stay with a child until the teacher and helper(s) arrives.*

Physical Contact

Physical contact is a healthy way to communicate the love of Jesus to kids, but any and all physical contact must be done in an appropriate manner, and in a public setting.

1. Appropriate to initiate in proper context and with the consent of the child
 - a. Celebrating/Greeting: high fives, handshakes, hugs
 - b. Circle prayer: holding hands, hands on shoulders
 - c. Comfort and redirection: a hand on the shoulder, hugs, (please note: holding a child and/or a child sitting on a volunteer's lap is ok for Littles/ Middles classrooms only)

2. Inappropriate to initiate
 - a. wrestling, caressing, grabbing, slapping, hitting, or spanking
 - b. any forced or coerced form of physical contact
 - c. In a family situation, wrestling, and tickling can be just fine, but in ministry settings it's best to avoid it especially as children move toward adolescence.

Classroom Transparency

We want to make sure all of our Union Kids classrooms are completely transparent. To accomplish this goal, we make sure that there is always a way for parents and guardians to see into classrooms from the outside. If a classroom does not have windows, then we keep the classroom door open.⁷

Secure Check-in/Check-out Procedures

Classrooms will open 15 minutes prior to regularly scheduled worship gatherings and will close fifteen minutes after the close of the service. All children must be checked-in prior to entrance of their classroom. Upon check-in you will receive a claim tag that matches the number on your child's name tag. In the event you lose your security tag, you will be asked to show a form of identification. Your child's safety is our first priority.

All parents/guardians have access to their children at all times as long as they present their check-in security information. If you need to check on your child, please ask the Host to help you. Going into the classroom may upset your child (he or she may think that it is time to go), and it may upset the other children. Please feel free to check on your children through the windows and/or classroom doors. If you want to sit in the classroom to observe, please check-in with the teacher and that week's team leader.

Sickness Policy

If your child is sick or has been sick in the past 24 hours (including, but not limited to, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, severe coughing, colored nasal drainage, pink eye, head lice, undiagnosed rash, open skin lesions, and any infectious disease), please respect others by keeping them at home. If your child shows any signs of sickness, we reserve the right to ask you to remove him or her from the classroom.

We believe that God has called us to minister to people and will, therefore, strive to provide a safe environment that is safe and accepting of everyone. Children who appear, or become, ill at the church gathering will be separated from the other children, and the parent/guardian will be requested immediately.

Parents are asked to contact a member of the Union Kids leadership team if their child contracts a communicable disease (such as chicken pox, head lice, fifth disease, etc.) after attending a worship gathering.

Our sickness policy exists for the protection of the children in our care. We regret that it sometimes means not admitting children that have been brought to our public gatherings.

Food Policy

Feeding young children is a serious responsibility. Children should be fed before coming to church. Infants will be given formula, milk, juice, or water when parents provide these items and instructions. If there are any special feeding instructions for your child, please put this information in writing. A snack of water and Cheerios & puffs or pretzels & veggie straws (etc.) will be served to children one year old and up. If lesson plans call for any snacks or food tasting other than these, we will do our best to inform parents during drop off. Please let the classroom teacher know if your child may not taste these foods or has an allergy.

Sanitation and Hygiene Policy

The very nature of childhood behavior can create an environment that has the potential to spread infection. Therefore, it is our commitment to try and maintain the safest and cleanest atmosphere possible to ensure the health and welfare of all children.

Strict hand washing with soap and water is of utmost importance in preventing the spread of infection. All personnel within Union Kids will be instructed on proper hand washing techniques and appropriate times to wash their hands. Toys and furniture will be washed with disinfectant solution after each use.

Restroom and Diaper policy

Parents, please take your child to the restroom or ensure they have a clean/dry diaper before checking them in.

a) Once checked-in for the gathering, kids can only visit the bathrooms when escorted by one or more approved Union Kids Leaders.

b) The volunteer may accompany children to the restroom and stand outside while the child uses the restroom.

c) Only adult female volunteers will help with diaper changes and assist inside the restrooms when needed.

d) Adult male leaders can escort 1st-6th grade kids to the bathrooms but cannot enter the bathrooms while in use by a child.

e) If children need assistance or supervision while in the restroom, more than one adult must always be present. No adult will ever be alone with a child. It is the policy of Union Kids that all diaper changes and toilet assistance will be done in the presence of two adults.

If the child requests a volunteer's help in the restroom or stall, the volunteer should explain to the child how to help herself/himself. If the volunteer's help is essential, the volunteer should avoid direct contact with the child, and keep the restroom or stall door open. Use the "hand-over-hand" method. This technique enables the volunteer to place her hands over the child's hands in helping with fastening clothes, wiping skin, and the like.

f) In our "Middles" classroom, we do not change diapers. In the event of a bowel movement or accident, the parent/guardian will be called from the auditorium to change their child.

g) Parents and guardians are requested to use only disposable diapers when dropping children off at Union Kids. Please bring an adequate supply of disposable diapers and wipes as well as an extra change of clothes for all infants and toddlers. Please drop off your child with a dry diaper. We will only change diapers when the child has had a bowel movement.

Classroom Management

The effective spiritual formation of all our children requires a stable environment and some form of discipline. The role of **Union Kids** is to support and supplement parental training by upholding high standards for behavior, respect and discipline.

We follow four simple steps of classroom discipline, as listed below. Any disciplinary measures beyond these four steps are the role of the parent, not Union Church.

1. Positive Reinforcement
2. Warning from a Leader/Leader Intervention
3. Removing the child from the situation (allow time and space for the child to regulate)
4. Calling the parents for assistance

We want every child to experience a safe, fun and loving environment at Union Church, and we certainly never want to embarrass or harm a child in any way. We never yell at kids or raise our voices in correction, and we never use physical contact to discipline a child in our care. Please do not hesitate to ask for help if you're facing a challenge with a child.

We strongly believe that we are partnering with the parents in all aspects of what we do, but especially with discipline. We get 60-90 minutes with these kids each week and the parents are there for the rest. They know their child(ren) infinitely better than we ever

will. If a child is not responding to any of the listed disciplinary steps, the room leader may talk to the Kids Director and they, along with the pastor(s) will seek advice from the parents on how to best interact with their child(ren). The more we include the parents in what we do the better atmosphere we can create for these kids to experience Jesus.

Expectations

Some of the expectations we have for your child(ren) include:

-Every child participates with a willing heart, eager to learn and obey. The attitude should be respectful to authority.

-The child is to avoid being disruptive or distracting to the mission and purpose of the children's ministry.

-Disrespect (whether verbally, by gesture, in attitude, or by action) is unacceptable.

-Misbehavior (including, but not limited to, persistent talking, distracting others, not following instructions ignoring instructions or directions, or interacting inappropriately with others in the class) is unacceptable.

Leader Age Requirements

In order to ensure that our classrooms are appropriately supervised, there are a few age requirements for our Leaders:

1. Every class must have at least one Leader who is age 18 or older.
2. People under the age of 16 cannot serve as Hosts and can only serve as volunteers in the following rooms: Littles & Middles
3. The minimum requirement for someone to serve is to be in 6th grade.
4. A person under 6th grade is only allowed to be a volunteer if he/she serves under the direct supervision of his/her parent/guardian or, on a case-by-case basis, a trusted adult family member.

Union Kids | Accidental Injury and Abuse

Accidental Injury

Although we will do our best to minimize risk of injury by following safety guidelines and by using wisdom as we lead our classes, sometimes there are things that happen beyond our control that require medical attention and, in some cases, a record for liability purposes.

In the event a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, volunteers will provide first aid as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up. A first aid kit is available on each classroom cart.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the Kid's Director or person in charge of Union Kids for the day. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once a child has received appropriate medical attention, an Accident/Injury Report Form will be completed and kept on file by the church leadership. These forms available at the Kid's Check-In area.

Responding to Incidents or Suspected Incidences of Abuse

Arizona law requires us as a church to report any incidences, or suspected incidences of child abuse. We are responsible not only to the State of Arizona, but also to God to do all we can to protect the kids from abuse. Child abuse includes any type of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse as well as neglect.

If you see, hear or sense an incident of child abuse, contact the Kid's Director as soon as you possibly can and they will then correspond with one of your pastors/elders. Do not wait any longer than twenty-four hours. After reporting the abuse, we are responsible to fill out a report form and to notify the authorities.

From AZ DCS Website:

"A report of suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment is a responsible attempt to protect a child. Arizona law requires certain persons who suspect that a child has received non-accidental injury or has been neglected to report their concerns to DCS or local law enforcement (ARS §13-3620.A). YOU may be a child's only advocate at the time you report the possibility of abuse or neglect. Children often tell a person with whom they feel safe about abuse or neglect. If a child tells you of such experiences, act to protect that child by calling the toll free Arizona Child Abuse Hotline at 1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445).

Much of the content for Union Kids Handbook was adapted and adopted from Bridgetown Church in Portland, OR. We are thankful for their willingness to share their resources with us.