

## **SJR Children's Ministry Philosophy**

### **1. Vision Statement**

St. John's Richmond Children and Youth ministries seeks to equip families and volunteer leaders to raise children as disciples of Christ through teaching the Bible in a faith community.

### **2. What does God, through the Bible, say about children?**

We believe that children are an important part of the family of God. We believe that children "are a heritage from the LORD" (Psalm 127:3) and we want to follow the example of Jesus by welcoming all children into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 19:13-15).

Children are not only able, but also eager to learn about God and to experience a relationship with Him. We are committed to guiding them in this journey by creatively teaching the Bible, worshipping God together in a variety of ways and experiencing fellowship with one another.

### **3. What is Our Aim?**

Our aim to provide a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for children and youth of any age, gender, ethnicity, culture or financial situation. We are committed to providing a place where children and youth can hear about the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and learn to be His disciples from an early age and grow in that knowledge and love. One of the most significant ways this is done at St. John's is through careful study of the Bible and creative and age-appropriate presentation of Scripture and subsequent teaching of its meaning and relevance.

### **4. Why Biblically based teaching?**

We believe that the Bible is God's written Word, inspired and authoritative, true and trustworthy, coherent, sufficient for salvation, living and powerful as God's guide for belief and behaviour. Therefore, the use of the Bible in our Children's and Youth ministry is unquestionable.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy; "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16-17, ESV). At St. John's we agree with the apostle Paul and seek to disciple those in our care through the use of strong biblical teaching.

We are also committed to understanding each biblical text in the context of its biblical book and in the greater context of the biblical narrative. This narrative is anchored in the person of Jesus Christ and the work of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in the world.

## **Communicating the Bible**

### **1. Active Engagement**

Every child has a unique learning style and engages with new information in different ways. Our Children Ministry seeks to actively and creatively immerse children in the Bible. We believe it is important to interact with children in a way that involves their mind, emotions, spirit, imagination and body. Therefore, we participate in activities such as singing, drawing, acting, reading, speaking, listening, asking questions and playing games. Engaging the children

using many different methods helps to reinforce and embed biblical truths in their lives and draws them deeper into a relationship with God.

## **2. Art and Drama**

The children of St. John's regularly participate in activities involving visual and dramatic art. We believe God has created every person with an imagination and we seek to foster this in each child. Encouraging children's imaginations helps them enter into the biblical accounts in unique and memorable ways.

## **3. Learning and studying the Word of God**

Each age group at St. John's participates in age appropriate study of the Bible. The younger grade levels work to identify the book of the Bible where the biblical account is recorded, learn about key biblical characters and gain a basic understanding of who God reveals Himself to be in the Bible. The younger grades also work on memorizing key verses from the Bible. As the children mature, they will learn how to study the Bible by reading passages aloud together and working with the written text. The older children are also involved in verse memorization. We want children to begin studying the Bible as part of their everyday life and therefore we seek to model this spiritual discipline in the context of Sunday School.

### **Making Disciples**

At SJR we aim to create disciples of Jesus through; **Bible Teaching** - understanding God's written word and working out its meaning; **Worship** - a response to the promises and truths we find in God's word.; **and** **Fellowship** - learning to love and care about those in the family of God as a practical outpouring of the gospel's work in our lives.

#### **1. Bible Teaching**

Our curriculum is biblically based and created as a result of careful study of each passage we teach. It is our aim that our teachers and children will learn to study the Bible in a humble and thorough manner.

#### **2. Worship**

A central part of the Christian life is worship. In worship, we give glory to God for who He is and all that He has done, is doing, and will do in the world. Worship can be done both corporately and personally, and in a variety of ways. We desire to expose children to diverse forms of corporate worship on Sunday mornings. Listed below are just some examples of how we worship.

##### *Music*

All Christians are capable of worshipping God in song and are instructed to do so. The Psalmist writes that we are to "Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!" (Psalm 100:2) But worship is not an activity for adults only! Matthew records in his gospel that it is children in the temple who proclaim Jesus as the "Son of David" and worship Him (Matthew 21). At St. John's Richmond we seek to engage our children in both joyful and meaningful music every Sunday. We carefully select the songs that we use to ensure that they not only convey an atmosphere of praise and joy but also one of worship and truth.

#### *Liturgy*

Our time with the children on Sunday Mornings is shaped by an age-appropriate liturgical structure. Children are taught simple liturgical forms including: Confession, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed and by using a Communion Preparation Liturgy on the weeks that we join the adults for communion.

#### *Prayer*

A life of prayer is an invaluable discipline that Jesus modelled. We seek to emulate that in all we do; as we prepare and as we teach and as pray with the children. Part of our discipleship is teaching children to pray and providing them with opportunities to pray. It is our hope that each child would develop prayer as part of their daily life.

### **3. Fellowship**

"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth." I John 3:18

Fellowship within the body of believers is a practical outpouring of Bible teaching and worship. By spending time with other believers we learn to love and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ and are able to be transformed by the grace shown to us by others. This reciprocal relationship that exists between Christians is why we encourage all families and volunteers to regularly attend a service on Sunday as part of their commitment to the body of believers at St. John's Vancouver. Healthy relationships are another important part of Christian fellowship. This is why we assign each teacher to a specific age group for the entire year. This provides consistency for both the teachers and children and creates an environment in which positive relationships can be formed.

It is important to understand that Children and Youth Ministry volunteers will have a major impact on the lives of those they lead. We want to ensure that this impact is a positive one by encouraging teachers to take their commitment to the children in Sunday School seriously. Therefore, we expect volunteers to fulfill their scheduled teaching weeks as part of their commitment to the ministry.