

Cityside Baptist Church Children and Youth Guidelines for Pastoral Care and Communication with Children and Youth

Reviewed December 2016

Purpose

To give clear guidelines for Cityside adults to interact pastorally and to communicate with non-related Cityside children and youth, in order to keep all interactions transparent and everyone safe.

Procedures

1. **Pastoral versus therapeutic role:** As Cityside adults who are in a pastoral relationship with the Cityside children and youth, we are all there to walk alongside our children and youth and help them where we can by listening, supporting, encouraging, and befriending them, and sharing with them spiritual and personal formation resources and tools. It is however important to remember that we are in a pastoral relationship with them, not a therapeutic role. Our children and youth may need the expertise of experienced helping professionals or agencies to help them in an on-going way if their needs exceed those that can be met with an empathic listener and a shared holding of their pain along with God.
 - 1.1. Citysiders who are developing a pastoral relationship with children or youth may find that specific issues arise that require a more formal setting and someone trained in this area to help the child or youth process and heal. In these cases, they should work with the child/youth and their family to help refer them to a suitable person or agency (*see Policy for Responding to and Reporting Suspected Abuse or Concerns About Well-Being*).
 - 1.2. Generally, it is not recommended for Citysiders to enter into a professional therapeutic relationship with a young Citysider they have close community relationship with, as this can blur the lines between client/fellow community member.
2. **Avoid being alone with an unrelated child or youth.** This applies within the Cityside building and at off-site social events or home visits, at camps or when transporting. If necessary, include another child as well, or ensure that you remain within sight and sound of other Cityside adults. If you are unavoidably in a room with a child or youth for a short time, always leave the door open.
3. **Communicate regularly and clearly:**
 - 3.1. Leaders of groups and programmes for children and youth should make every effort to keep children/youth and their parents and caregivers regularly informed about what has been planned. This could be through methods like the Bits, email or posted letter, verbal notices in the Sunday morning service, or closed Facebook groups.
 - 3.2. Where possible, include parents in the communication with their children and youth. Citysiders should copy parents into emails or texts to their children and youth if possible, and include parents

in Facebook and other social media groups so that they have open access to any communication with their children if they want.

- 3.3. Citysiders need to ensure that any cards, letters, texts, emails or other communications they send to individual children would be appropriate for their parents to read as well.
- 3.4. If phoning a child or younger youth, if possible speak to a parent first to ask permission to talk with their child. Disclose the reason for calling and the intended content of the conversation. If this is not possible, it may be appropriate to let the parent know afterwards the nature of your conversation instead, perhaps via text. Keep the phone call only as long as is needed – it would be usual for most phone calls of this nature to be less than five minutes.
- 3.5. If a pastoral home visit to a child or youth becomes needed and is appropriate, permission must be sought from the parents first. When visiting, never be alone with the child or youth – include the parents if possible or a visiting-partner, or arrange to visit with a group of children or youth, or talk in a room where others are also present.