

Gospel Light's

baby beginnings®

# nursery smart pages

*A Guide for Nursery Directors & Caregivers*

**Includes:**

**Policies and Procedures**

**Volunteer Training Articles**

**Recruitment Helps**

**Updated Health and Safety Guidelines**

**Nursery Clip Art**

**Two Years of Monthly Parent Newsletters**

**All Reproducible**



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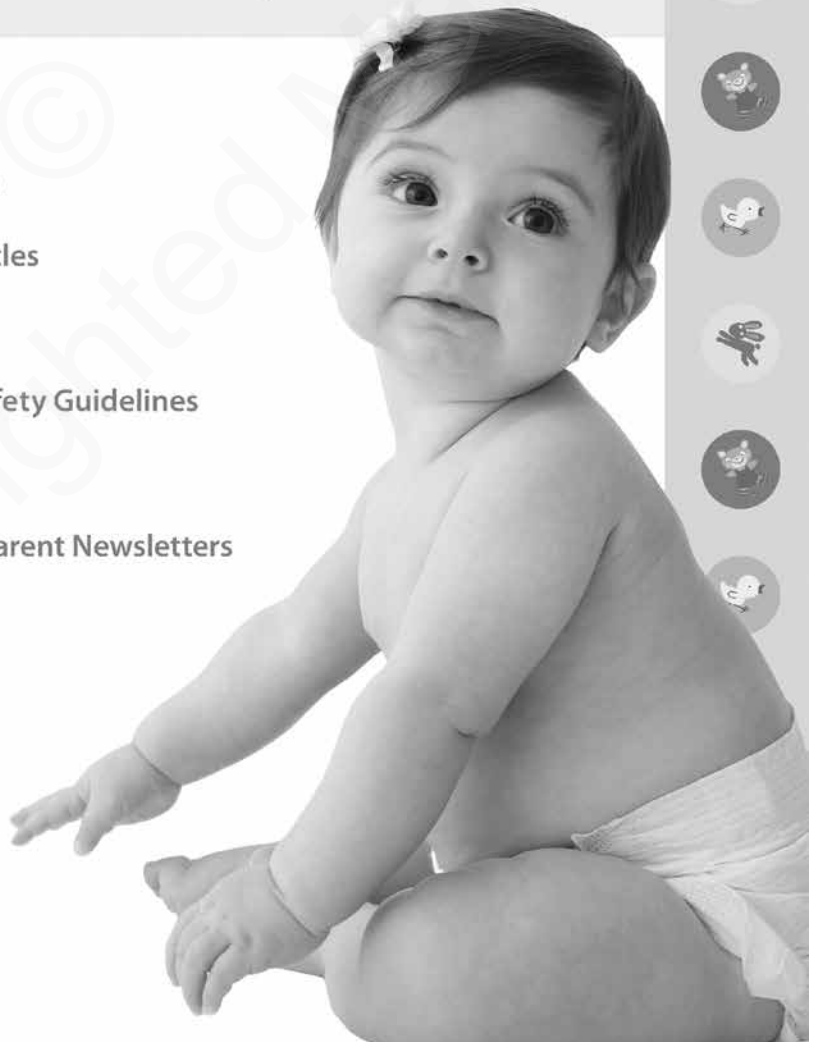
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**Two Years of Monthly Parent Newsletters**



**DAVID COOK**  
*transforming lives together*

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**A Step-by-Step Plan for Your Nursery.....5**

**Organizing Your Nursery ..... 9**

Practical information that can help you build a quality nursery ministry.

**Caregivers** ..... 10  
**Health/Safety** ..... 35  
**Partnering with Parents** ..... 63  
**Room/Supplies** ..... 89

**Teacher Training Articles .. 109**

Concise, informative articles dealing with issues of concern to caregivers of babies and toddlers.

**Babies:** Meeting the Needs of Babies..... 110  
**Biting:** Nightmare in the Nursery..... 111  
**Books:** Exploring Books Together ..... 112  
**Characteristics:** Take a Look at Babies .... 113  
**Characteristics:** Take a Look at Toddlers .. 114  
**Clean and Safe:** Next to Godliness ..... 115  
**Communication:** Communication with Nontalkers..... 116  
**Crying:** Understanding a Baby’s Cry..... 117  
**Curriculum:** Why Use Curriculum? ..... 119  
**Diapering:** “Clean” Diaper Changes..... 121  
**Discipline:** Discipline in the Nursery..... 123  
**Environment:** The View from Down Here . 124  
**Families:** Extending Your Nursery Ministry 125  
**Feeding:** Hungry Babies ..... 127  
**Feeding:** Hungry Toddlers..... 128  
**Learning:** Teaching Babies About God .... 129  
**Learning:** Time for Toddlers ..... 130  
**Love:** First Corinthians 13: The Caregiver’s Version ..... 131  
**Male Caregivers:** Men in the Nursery ..... 132  
**Mixed Ages:** Older Children in the Nursery..... 133

**Music:** Using Music in the Nursery..... 135  
**Observation:** Observation Guide ..... 137  
**Outdoor Play:** The Great Outdoors ..... 138  
**Play:** Babies at Work ..... 139  
**Room:** What Does Your Nursery Say?..... 141  
**Self-esteem:** Helping Little Ones Feel Secure ..... 142  
**Separation:** Welcoming a Baby to the Nursery ..... 143  
**Sleeping:** Sleeping in the Nursery..... 145  
**Special Needs:** Caring for Special Children 146  
**Toddlers:** Toddler Tips..... 147  
**Visitors:** Welcome, Visitors! ..... 149

**Parent’s Home Pages ..... 151**

Two years’ worth of tips and activities to help parents of children under three continue the learning their children experience at church.

Introductory Parent’s Home Pages ..... 152  
**Parent’s Home Pages 0 to 18 Months Year 1**  
 September ..... 153  
 October ..... 155  
 November..... 157  
 December ..... 159  
 January..... 161  
 February..... 163  
 March ..... 165  
 April..... 167  
 May ..... 169  
 June..... 171  
 July..... 173  
 August ..... 175  
**Parent’s Home Pages 0 to 18 Months Year 2**  
 September ..... 177  
 October ..... 179  
 November..... 181  
 December ..... 183

January..... 185  
 February..... 187  
 March ..... 189  
 April..... 191  
 May ..... 193  
 June..... 195  
 July..... 197  
 August ..... 199

**Parent’s Home Pages  
 18 to 36 Months Year 1**

September ..... 201  
 October ..... 203  
 November ..... 205  
 December ..... 207  
 January..... 209  
 February..... 211  
 March ..... 213  
 April..... 215  
 May ..... 217  
 June..... 219

July..... 221  
 August ..... 223

**Parent’s Home Pages  
 18 to 36 Months Year 2**

September ..... 225  
 October ..... 227  
 November ..... 229  
 December ..... 231  
 January..... 233  
 February..... 235  
 March ..... 237  
 April..... 239  
 May ..... 241  
 June..... 243  
 July..... 245  
 August ..... 247

**Clip Art** ..... 249

**Index**..... 257

# A Step-by-Step Plan for Your Nursery

Gospel Light's Baby Beginnings baby/toddler program is the most complete resource available for churches who either want to begin or maintain a quality ministry to children in the first two to three years of life. Whether your church is large or small, you can use these resources. Here is a step-by-step plan for what to do.

## 1. Start with the basics: health and safety.

- Evaluate the nursery room, procedures and staff according to the Organizing Your Nursery section of this book.
- Use the Health and Safety Checklists found on pages 58-61.
- Set several short- and long-term goals for improving the operation of your nursery based on your evaluation.

## 2. Help your staff introduce a Bible-based theme for each month.

• At the beginning of every month, display in the nursery the three appropriate posters from the *Baby Beginnings Nursery Posters*. Caregivers, whether serving for several months, a few weeks or even as substitutes, will be able to see at a glance on the teaching poster the monthly theme, a simple song, finger fun and Bible story to use with children in the nursery. The Bible Story Picture and the photo poster for each month will not only help make your nursery attractive, but will provide caregivers with theme-related pictures to talk about with children.

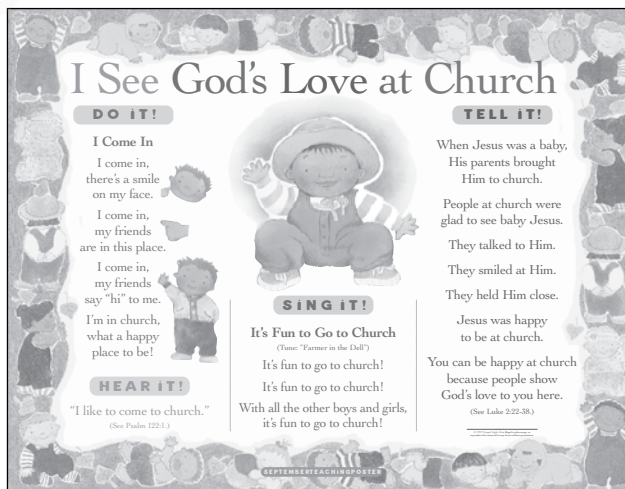
• **Use Tips:** Display the teaching posters at an adult's eye level. Display the Bible Story Picture and photo posters where children can see them.

Purchase enough *Nursery Posters* so that each nursery room has its own supply of posters.

• **Bonus Idea:** Download the free resource files (<http://www.gospellight.com/>[link redacted]) and ask every caregiver to watch the *How to Build a Quality Nursery* video for ideas on how to make your nursery a healthy, happy place where babies and toddlers are introduced to God's love.

How can we make sure the posters and pictures last?

Posters and pictures can be laminated or covered on both sides with clear Con-Tact paper for greater durability. Lamination will also allow for occasional cleaning with a bleach and water solution.



### 3. Add a musical touch!

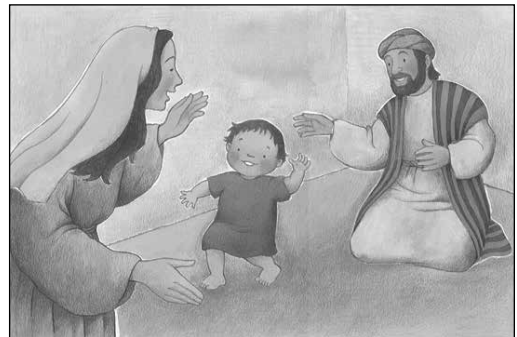
- Provide the *Baby Beginnings I Love to Sing!* CD for teachers to play and sing along with in the nursery. The upbeat, simple songs on the Active Time segment will give teachers ways to play with children as they talk about the monthly theme. The gentle, soothing songs on the Quiet Time segment are perfect for calming babies and toddlers.
- **Use Tip:** Reproduce CDs for parents in your nursery program to use at home or in the car.

Where can our nursery staff find all  
the good stuff they need?

Designate a specific shelf or cupboard where all curriculum-related materials will be stored. At this same location, post one or more sheets which clearly tell the procedures each caregiver needs to follow (for example, how to set up the room—show a photo of how the room should look; how to check in children—include a copy of the check-in form; how to connect children’s activities with the monthly Bible theme—provide the curriculum materials needed; how to clean up the room—give a brief checklist of what needs to be done). Consider creating a box for each month that contains the supplies for the month’s learning activities as described in the *Baby Beginnings Teacher’s Guides*. At the beginning of the month, the box is placed in the appropriate rooms for use by teachers.

### 4. Keep going with Bible Story Picture Cards!

- Place a copy of the *Baby Beginnings I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Cards in each nursery room. Instruct each caregiver to use the card for the month to tell and talk about a short Bible story with children, one-on-one.
- **Use Tips:** Where many staff are in the same room, provide two or three copies of the cards for teachers to use.
- Purchase an *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture card set for each child. At the beginning of the month, make the cards available for parents (mail cards, set them out on a counter or in a pocket on your nursery bulletin board for parents to take copies, teachers place cards in diaper bags). Or in September, give the entire Bible Story Picture Card set to each family; give new families a copy during the year.



**5. Don't stop now! Help caregivers, teachers and parents be prepared to use learning activities to take advantage of teachable moments in communicating Bible truths to children.**

**Teacher's Guide—0 to 18 Months**  
**Children's Pastor or Nursery Coordinator**

- Prior to the start of each month, send home the appropriate month's overview (first two pages of each month's section) to each caregiver in the nursery.
- If you have a regular, consistent staff for the month, include the activity pages for each month as well and encourage your staff to plan together which activities they will provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)
- If you have a rotating staff, select several of the activities yourself. Collect any needed supplies and place them in the appropriate rooms along with the page of instructions (highlight or mark the activity). Alert the staff to look for these items when they arrive to serve.

**Teacher's Guide—18 to 36 Months**  
**Children's Pastor or Nursery Coordinator**

- Prior to the start of each month, send home the appropriate month's overview (first two pages of each month) to each caregiver in the nursery.
- If you have a regular, consistent staff for the month, include the activity pages for each month as well and encourage your staff to plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)
- If you have a rotating staff, select several of the activities yourself. Collect any needed supplies and place them in the appropriate rooms along with the page of instructions (highlight or mark the activity). Alert the staff to look for these items when they arrive to serve.

**Toddler/2s Classroom Coordinator or Teacher**

- Each teacher in the classroom needs a copy of the monthly overview and activities. (Print out copies from the CD-ROM that comes with the *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guide—18 to 36 Months*.)
- Teachers plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)

How do we teach babies  
and toddlers?

The best session for babies and toddlers is one in which children freely play in a safe and interesting environment. Caregivers interact with children, participating with children in a variety of activities (singing, playing with toys, reading books, telling a simple story) and caring for physical needs. Young children are not developmentally ready for structured group activities, so while two or more children may occasionally gather to listen to a story, or do the motions to a song, don't expect toddlers to participate in a group learning time. Babies and toddlers learn best when the activity is one they have initiated, or when they express obvious enjoyment and interest in a teacher-initiated activity.



### Parent's Home Pages

• Print out and photocopy the monthly Parent's Home Page (on the CD-ROM bound in this book and also on the CD-ROM in both *Teacher's Guides*) and distribute to parents (mail them, set them out on a counter or in a pocket on your nursery bulletin board for parents to take copies, teachers place pages in diaper bags). Combine the Parent's Home Page with the appropriate month's *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Card by stapling or clipping each month's page and picture together.

• **Bonus Idea:** Supplement the learning ideas on the Home Pages with the instant activities in the *Baby Beginnings I Love to Wiggle and Giggle!* easel book. Each nursery room needs at least one easel book. Additional books should be purchased if the room is large and has more than two caregivers. Encourage parents to purchase an easel book to have at home, using the activities with their child to reinforce the learning that has taken place at church.

How can I make sure our nursery makes the best use of these nursery materials?

Ask parents of children in the nursery to take the responsibility for one or more of these tasks: display the appropriate posters each month and store posters for reuse, distribute the Teacher's and Parent's Home Pages and Bible Story Picture Cards, and reproduce and distribute *I Love to Sing!* music CDs to parents. In larger churches, the nursery coordinator or members of the nursery committee can do these jobs.

Members of an adult Sunday School class, a Grandparent's Club or the church youth groups can help with collating tasks.

## Organizing Your Nursery

This section contains concise and practical information that can help you build a quality nursery ministry from the ground floor up. There are two ways to find specific information you need:

- (1) Use the index at the back of this book;
- (2) Read the section containing information on the subject you need help with.

Procedures are suggested for the following categories:

### Caregivers

Describes everything you need to know about staffing a nursery. Includes recruiting tips, job descriptions, screening and application forms, scheduling and training ideas.

### Parents

Gives guidelines for communicating with parents and making it easy for parents to communicate with you. Describes and provides samples for nursery handbooks and brochures, check-in forms and record keeping, plus a bonus Problem Solving with Parents section.

### Health/Safety

Provides vital information about making your nursery safe for the children God has entrusted to your care. You'll find suggestions and tips for keeping the nursery clean, checking in children and their belongings, handling diapering and feeding of children, safety checklists, ways to respond to illnesses and emergencies and more.

### Room/Supplies

Provides complete descriptions of everything in the well-equipped nursery environment. Includes equipment and furniture lists, room diagrams, guidelines for toy selection (as well as a section describing safe nursery toys you can make) and tips for handling specific room problems.

## VIPs in the Nursery

The adults in the nursery come in all shapes and sizes—some with lots of experience and some with very little. They're called by many names: workers, caregivers, aides, baby-sitters, attendants, helpers. But no matter what you call the adults who staff your nursery, realize that these people are very important people: they're teachers. They may not consider themselves teachers, but at no other time in little ones' lives are children learning so much, and learning so quickly. Almost everything caregivers do teaches and influences the babies and toddlers in their care.

As a teacher, the nursery caregiver creates a safe and interesting environment with age-appropriate activities, provides physical and emotional care and encourages interaction among children and adults (among other caregivers and parents, too!). The caregiver's influence is so significant, yet it cannot be measured, and here's one reason: First impressions are often lasting impressions. A church nursery is often the first place the child is cared for away from home. The response of a child to the church nursery likely will affect his or her response to other new places. A church nursery is also often the first time a child is cared for in a group setting. Again, a child's nursery experience will help shape future interaction with other children.

Not only are the children affected by what goes on in the nursery, but parents are deeply influenced by their child's reactions. Nursery caregivers have the opportunity to make a significant impression on people who are just beginning their lives as parents. When a child is born, many parents find themselves overwhelmed by the responsibility, and for the first time may see a need for some kind of church experience. New parents may feel uncertain about what to do and how to properly meet the varying needs of their children—both physical and spiritual. A loving caregiver can be just the resource—and friend—a new parent needs.

## Caregiver Ratio

Many variables affect the number of caregivers needed in the nursery. Generally, one teacher can adequately care for two or three babies and toddlers (use the higher number for toddlers) or three to four two-year-olds. Always plan for at least two caregivers to work together in the nursery, no matter how few children

are present. Requiring two staff members to be present with each group of children allows emergency situations to be dealt with and protects the caregivers and the church from unsupported parent complaints.

Recent research has shown that maintaining the proper ratios of caregivers to children helped children experience fewer tantrums, develop more advanced language skills, play in more complex ways with each other and their toys, and develop increased attachment to their caregivers. Caregivers also demonstrated gentler means of guiding children when they were responsible for smaller numbers of children.

## Options for Staffing

Churches use a variety of staffing options: paid workers (church members, members of other churches who meet at different times, licensed caregivers obtained through a referral agency, students at a nearby Christian college), volunteers (parents or other adults in the church) or a combination of options.

A sample application form for nursery staff is provided on the next pages. Adapt this form according to specific guidelines your church has adopted and any applicable laws in your state. Some churches require fingerprinting and police background checks for all staff who work with children. All churches should have a well thought-out screening process for all caregivers. If your church has not yet developed guidelines for screening children's workers, consult a legal expert in church liability issues.

Set up an interviewing team of at least two people for all paid positions (member of church staff who has oversight for the nursery program, nursery committee member, parent). Pay rates should be comparable to pay scales in your community. Follow any applicable state or federal laws for reporting income and withholding taxes.

Using paid caregivers has some advantages:

- higher expectations of workers to fulfill the job description;
- continuity of caregivers in the nursery;
- increased value to the position.

Using volunteer caregivers has advantages, too:

- staff has a higher degree of commitment to the nursery—workers are present because they've chosen the job;
- volunteers are more likely to view their job as a ministry.



# Volunteer Application Form



**IMPORTANT:** *This is a sample form, not intended to be reproduced.  
Adapt to your specific needs.*

First Church has a child/youth safety policy founded on respect and love for the children and youth of our church and community. This safety policy gives children, youth, parents and all Children's Ministry staff a sense of confidence and peace. We ask your cooperation in completing and returning this application.

## Personal Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call: Morning \_\_\_\_\_ Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_

Day and month of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Where employed \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Can you receive calls at work?  Yes  No

Do you have a current driver's license?  Yes  No

License number \_\_\_\_\_

Children  Yes  No

Name(s) and age(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse  Yes  No

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently a member of First Church?  Yes  No

If yes, how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list other churches and locations where you have regularly attended over the past five years

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you currently under a charge or have you ever been convicted of any crime?
2. Are you currently under a charge or have you ever been accused or convicted of child abuse or of any crime involving actual or attempted sexual misconduct or sexual molestation of a minor?  
 Yes  No

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you currently under a charge or have you ever been accused or convicted of possession/sale of controlled substances or of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol?  Yes  No

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there any other information that we should know? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





## Church Activity

1. Please write a brief statement of how you became a Christian.

---

---

---

2. In what activities/ministries of our church are you presently involved?

---

3. Experience:

a. What volunteer or career experiences with babies and toddlers have you had in the church or the community?

---

b. List any gifts, calling, training, education or other factors that have prepared you for ministry to babies and toddlers.

---

4. Does your health limit your ability to lift children?

---

---

5. Why do you want to work in the nursery?

---

6. When are you available to work in the nursery? (Days of the week; day or evening.)

---

## Personal References

(Not a relative)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any of the above references or churches to give you any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness to work with youth or children.

I hereby certify that I have read and that I understand the attached provisions of (insert title of your state's penal code regarding the reporting of child abuse and neglect).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

No matter what combination of paid and volunteer nursery staffing you use, always make feedback possible. Leave copies of this form in nursery rooms for caregivers to complete at any time. In addition, several times a year give forms to all caregivers to complete. Caregivers who feel their concerns are listened to and acted upon will be more likely to continue in their nursery ministry.



## Tell Us What You Think!

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any concerns you have about health and safety, staffing and equipment needs.

---



---



---

What do you think needs to be improved in the nursery? Why?

---



---



---

What ideas do you have for improving the nursery?

---



---



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**Thanks for your help in making our nursery a friendly, safe place to be!**



## Scheduling Do's and Don'ts

The number of options for scheduling caregivers is probably equal to the number of nursery programs in existence! However, one overriding principle to keep in mind is that continuity of familiar caregivers is a high priority in nursery programs. Babies and toddlers (and nervous parents!) need the security of familiar faces and voices. Continuity of care is the ideal to strive for constantly.

Children and their parents aren't the only ones who benefit from familiar caregivers. Adults who spend their time in the nursery will also find their experience much more enjoyable (and hopefully serve more often) if they are given the opportunity to get to know the children in their care, learning about and appreciating their growth and development. Building relationships with children and their parents leads a caregiver to truly experience the benefits of a nursery ministry!

The ideal plan is to schedule caregivers in the nursery for six to twelve months at a time. Shorter time commitments of two to five months can also be effective. If caregivers serve for one month at a time, schedule their terms of service so that they overlap, resulting in some new and some familiar faces each week. Sample reminder notices that can be mailed to caregivers are provided on the following pages. Also include infor-

mation about nursery procedures and the monthly Bible themes and suggested learning activities (see *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guide—0 to 18 Months* and *Teacher's Guide—18 to 36 Months*).

When possible, build teams of caregivers who can encourage each other in this important ministry to young children, and who will enjoy serving together. Caregivers are more likely to continue in service when their experiences have been positive. It's also helpful to pair an inexperienced caregiver with someone who is familiar with your nursery procedures and who is experienced in childcare techniques.

If you find it necessary to recruit caregivers for a week at a time, try one of these alternatives to lessen the negative impact of such a "revolving door" policy: (1) caregivers serve one session each month (over a period of several months, children will come to recognize these caregivers); (2) hire or recruit at least one caregiver who is present regularly (at least a month at a time) and is the familiar face that welcomes families to the nursery.

Post a schedule of caregivers in the nursery (particularly if you use a rotating staff), give caregivers child-safe name tags to wear (adhesive tags work well) and post their names near the nursery entrance so parents know who is caring for their children.



# IT'S YOUR TURN!

DURING THE MONTH OF OCTOBER  
YOU ARE SCHEDULED FOR:

- Crib Nursery, 8:30 Service
- Toddler Nursery, 8:30 Service
- Crib Nursery, 9:45 Sunday School
- Toddler Nursery, 9:45 Sunday School
- Crib Nursery, 11:00 Service
- Toddler Nursery, 11:00 Service

If you are  
unable to serve  
at your  
scheduled time,  
please call  
Jonelle Smith  
at 555-5555.

*Dear Lisa,*

*I'm so glad you will be teaching in our toddler room during the month of May at the 10:30 Worship Service. Even though we don't have a formal lesson time with children this age, each child you talk with and play with will be learning from you. I've enclosed the information about this month's theme: People at Church Help Me.*

*Here are some tips that will make your time in the toddler room enjoyable:*

- Dress comfortably. Wear low-heeled shoes.*
- Arrive at 10:15. Everything goes smoother when the adults are in the room ready for the children's arrival.*
- Read the nursery instructions on the bulletin board for information about checking in children, changing diapers and feeding.*
- Use the children's names frequently throughout the session.*

*Please call if you have any questions. Thanks!*

*Mark Thomas, Nursery Coordinator, 222-2222*

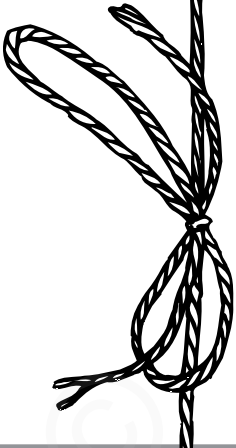






# CFC NURSERY DEPARTMENT

## VOLUNTEER



**Calvary Fellowship Church**  
**95 West Devon Drive**  
**Downingtown, PA 19335**  
**(610) 363-7171**

Used by permission from Calvary Fellowship Church, Downingtown, Pennsylvania.

*"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 19:14

### WELCOME!

We are very pleased that you have chosen to work in the nursery. We think you will enjoy serving in our nursery as you serve our Lord.

We have a simple goal: to provide a safe, secure, happy and loving environment for both our children and their parents.

### PROCEDURES

- \* Arrive at least 15 minutes before start of service
- \* Take child from parent (over Dutch door)
- \* Sign child in on attendance sheet
- \* Give parent ID Badge
- \* Give parent locator card
- \* Place label on child
- \* Play with children
- \* Give snacks when needed
- \* Change diapers when necessary
- \* Wipe down changing pad after each use
- \* Take ID badges from parents
- \* Give child to parent (over Dutch door)
- \* Clean up toys
- \* Wipe down toys and changing pad with disinfectant
- \* Empty trash
- \* Report any problems to the Nursery Coordinator

### HEALTH POLICIES

In order to minimize the risk of infection and diseases, we ask all workers to abide by the following guidelines:

- \* Please use disposable gloves for ALL diaper changes.
  - \* Please use disinfectant on all surfaces such as trays, toys, slides and changing pad.
  - \* Do not allow any child to enter the nursery who has had one of the following conditions within the previous 24 hours:
    - rash, cough, fever, vomiting, or runny nose (anything but clear)
  - \* Please change all crib sheets that have been used.
  - \* Make sure all children have been signed in.
  - \* Complete a blue form for any child not listed on the attendance sheet.
  - Choking procedures are listed in each nursery. 911 may be dialed from the pay phone without a quarter.
  - All problems must be reported to the church office.
- ### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES
- \* To follow all procedures
  - \* To keep your schedules
  - \* To find a substitute or switch with someone when unable to serve
  - \* To arrive at least 15 minutes before the service starts

## Job Descriptions

Nursery caregivers will find their jobs easier if their assigned tasks are clear and specific. Develop a job description for each position in your nursery. Distribute the job descriptions to the appropriate staff, and use the descriptions as an aid for recruiting. If you have a rotating staff, post the job descriptions in the nursery rooms at the appropriate locations.

Depending on the size of your church, your nursery staff may include a variety of jobs: coordinator, caregiver, greeter, substitute, laundry, supplies, record keeping. Combine jobs in small churches. All job descriptions should include starting and ending dates (preferably six months to a year), the purpose of the job, specific tasks and what support will be provided. Job descriptions for caregivers may also include expected times of arrival and departure, how to maintain cleanliness in the room during and after the session, suggested activities and experiences to provide for children and what to do in case of emergencies or problems.

Adapt the following job descriptions, adding information specific to your church.

### Coordinator

#### Job Description

**TASK:** To recruit and schedule caregivers, overseeing their training and the nursery environment.

**TERM:** One year,  
beginning September 1

#### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Recruit the following positions:
  - Caregivers (Use the screening procedures established by our church)
  - Supply Coordinator
  - Snack Coordinator
  - Greeters
- Post and distribute caregiving schedules
- Distribute parent newsletter and teacher curriculum each month
- Plan at least one training event for caregivers
- Develop a budget for the year
- Update and distribute Nursery Handbook
- Communicate regularly with church staff liaison

## Caregiver

## Job Description

**TASK:** To lovingly care for babies and toddlers.

**TERM:** Three months, September through November

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Be present in the nursery from 11:00 A.M. until 12:15 P.M. each Sunday morning
- Upon arriving, quickly scan the room for safety hazards and remove any potential problem items (broken toys, coffee cups, etc.)
- Provide physical and emotional care for children
- Engage children in the learning activities suggested in the Teacher's Home Page
- Follow guidelines for diapering, feeding and caring for children as described in the Nursery Handbook
- Attend at least one training event previous to term of service

## Supply Coordinator

## Job Description

**TASK:** To purchase and distribute nursery supplies.

**TERM:** One year, beginning September 1

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Inventory and purchase needed supplies (obtain approval from Nursery Coordinator for purchases over \$25.00)
- Turn in receipts to church office for reimbursement
- Keep records of all purchases
- Help determine nursery budget

## Supply List:

- Snack (crackers and juice). Label with date of purchase and store on nursery shelves
- Diapering (baby wipes, disposable gloves, hand soap, diapers)
- Cleaning (trash can liners, bleach, sponges, paper towels)
- Care items (crib sheets, blankets, cloth diapers, toys)

## Greeter

## Job Description

**TASK:** To greet families and check in children as they arrive in the nursery.

**TERM:** Six months, September through February

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Be present in the nursery from 9:30 A.M. until 10:00 A.M. each Sunday morning
- Put out a new check-in form each Sunday. Place previous check-in form into the Attendance Form box in the reception office
- Offer a friendly greeting to each family
- Assist parent(s) as needed to check in (following the procedures described in our Nursery Handbook)
- Be alert for symptoms of illness. Do not admit baby with signs of illness, such as a cold or fever
- Encourage parents and older children to stay outside nursery area
- Assist parents in updating information cards every 2-3 months
- Pay special attention to visitors (give Nursery Handbook, provide directions to adult programs)

## Getting and Keeping Caregivers

Keeping a positive attitude about recruiting nursery volunteers can be a challenge. A lack of congregational awareness of the nursery program, adults who feel they've done their time in the nursery or the attitude that the nursery is just a place where baby-sitting takes place are barriers many churches face.

1. Publicize the positive benefits of the nursery ministry. Before beginning any recruiting effort, plan several ways to increase awareness of the nursery program. People do not want to make a commitment to a program about which they are unfamiliar or have only heard negative comments.

- Let others know the positive aspects of your nursery through newsletter or bulletin inserts. Periodically publish a brief humorous or heartwarming story about a child's interaction with a caregiver, or an eye-catching photo of your nursery's ministry.



HERE'S ONE  
OF THE MANY  
LITTLE REASONS  
WE HAVE A  
CHURCH NURSERY:



Did you know that over 45 children are lovingly cared for each Sunday in our nursery?

Did you know that a minimum of 15 adults work together each Sunday to provide loving care in our nursery?



Did you know that you can support our nursery by helping out when asked, by donating a new toy and by saying thank-you to one of our many nursery caregivers?



## OVERHEARD IN THE NURSERY

"I hope that friendly lady with the big smile is here today."  
One-year-old

"I meet more visitors to our church when I work in the nursery than in any other program I've ever helped in."  
Nursery Caregiver

"There's no better way to get a fresh look at life than to watch a toddler explore."  
Nursery Caregiver

"I've become a better parent from working in the nursery."  
Parent Volunteer

"You found my favorite blanket. You must love me!"  
Two-year-old

- Put up bulletin board displays identifying and picturing babies and toddlers at play with caregivers in the nursery. Or feature nursery caregivers, displaying their names and pictures and perhaps a quote about why they enjoy working in the nursery.
- Briefly interview nursery caregivers, during worship services or in adult classes, about the reasons they enjoy being in the nursery. Ask questions such as, "What do you remember about your first day in the nursery?" "What's your favorite thing to do in the nursery?" "How have you benefited by being in the nursery?" Take advantage of baby dedications or baptisms and new baby announcements to invite the congregation to visit the nursery. Periodically update the church staff or leadership about the number of visitors who have attended the nursery as a way of increasing their awareness of the nursery's importance.
- Organize parents of nursery children to help you form a baby/toddler parade during a worship service.

While playing fun music from a baby/toddler music CD, children and parents gather at the front of the church (carry babies or put them in strollers, toddlers walk or travel in wagons). Children may carry favorite toys or stuffed animals; tie helium-filled balloons to strollers, wagons or children's wrists. While children and parents are gathered at the front of the church, the pastor prays briefly for these families and the nursery caregivers who serve them.

- Another popular way to publicize your nursery is to show a video of the babies and toddlers in your nursery. (Note: Obtain parent permission before showing pictures of children.) Show the pictures in adult education classes or as part of a worship service. Preface the pictures with a statement such as "Here are some of the many little reasons our church has a nursery" or "These are the little ones we welcome in Jesus' name each week in our nursery." As the pictures are shown, play a song from a children's music CD.



2. Let others know when you are in need of nursery staff. Talk to leaders of all children's ministries, church staff, coordinators of new members' classes, etc. Communicate the goals and needs of your nursery, asking for names of possible volunteers and inviting prayer support. If recruiting is made the responsibility of just a few people, they tend to become overworked and discouraged; also, recruiting efforts tend to be made again and again to the same limited pool of people.

3. Continually maintain a prospect list. Avoid the trap of only looking for prospects when you face a vacancy. An ongoing prospect list helps change the focus from finding any available person as quickly as possible to finding the person who fits the position.

- Obtain names from the church membership list, new members' classes, adult class lists and survey forms.
- Consider parents, singles, seniors and collegians.
- Since young teens often want to help in the nursery, invite these youth helpers and their families to participate together in the nursery for a month at a time.
- Don't forget to recruit men! Using men in the nursery ministry benefits both the babies and the men involved. While some men may resist the idea of teaching babies or toddlers, little ones can greatly benefit from warm associations with male teachers. In fact, some babies respond better to men than to women! For a child without a strong or consistent male presence in the home, godly men in the nursery become important role models. Men are an essential part of a quality nursery staff. Some churches are reluctant to involve men because they believe parents are comfortable only with women caregivers. But by using well-thought out caregiving policies (such as having two adults present in each room at all times), there should be no problem with parent discomfort or possible abuse allegations. Adhering to clearly outlined policies eliminates confusion and frees adults to minister in the nursery by focusing their time and energy on the children.

Legal advisers suggest that no persons be allowed to supervise children of any age until they have been members or regular attenders of your church for at least six months, preferably a year. See "Options for Staffing," page 10, for other safety and liability issues regarding paid or volunteer nursery staff.

## Parents as Caregivers

While some parents (especially single parents) may need time away from their children in order to refresh and renew themselves, most parents benefit from participating in the nursery ministry. Some churches request that all parents assist in the nursery for one month during the year. Helping four or five weeks in a row is a better learning experience for parents and children alike than a rotating system of assisting one session each month. Arrange parent participation far in advance of the dates you expect parents to assist.

Let parents know the benefits they will receive as nursery caregivers. Parents will have an opportunity to see their child among other children of a similar age. Many parents find this experience increases their understanding of normal behavior at particular age levels.

Parents can work with an experienced caregiver who is able to share valuable insights gained from teaching many children. Effective learning comes when parents observe this teacher dealing with a variety of situations. As parents participate in specific learning activities with children, they have an opportunity to practice skills they can use at home. Also, parents develop a better understanding of the procedures in the nursery. Participating in one session will convey more than a caregiver can ever explain about how the department operates. In addition, caregivers, while observing the interaction between parent and child, can learn which caring techniques work best for the child. Parents and nursery staff working together can often do more to build and strengthen relationships between church and home than any other approach.

Sample parent recruiting letters are provided on the next page.



Dear Mommy and Daddy:

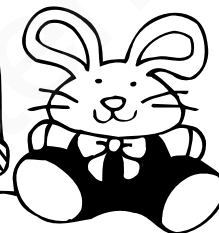
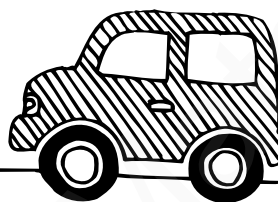
Please don't be shocked that I am writing to you. While crying, smiling, fussing and pointing have usually sufficed to get what I needed, my present need requires a more sophisticated form of communication.

To come right to the point, I need you to volunteer to help in my room at church during one session each Sunday morning (Sunday School or Worship) for one month during the coming year. I need you to do this to help ensure that there are always enough caring, capable adults to take care of me and my friends when we're at church. Besides, I think it's fun to show off my parents to my friends. (I won't always feel that way.)

One of the grown-ups at church (someone who talks better than I do) will be calling you in a few days to see if you'll do this for me. The grown-up who calls will help you settle on which month will be best for you. Also, you'll get a chance to find out about the great materials and activities our church provides to help me start learning about God and Jesus and other stuff I'm going to need to know.

So, I'm counting on you. I've already told the other kids at church that I've got the greatest parents in the whole wide room. Please don't let me down.

Sincerely,  
Jasmine



*TIP: Enclose a picture of their child with each parent's letter.*



### **A GREAT PLACE FOR BABIES & TODDLERS...AND MOMS AND DADS**

One of the BIG reasons our baby and toddler rooms are such terrific places for little ones is because so many parents volunteer to help out. Little ones feel safe and comfortable with a mom or dad who enjoys giving hugs, smiles, and a little comfort when needed. Having enough parent volunteers ensures that each child gets plenty of friendly, personal attention, so our baby and toddler rooms are usually very happy, enjoyable places for everyone.

Our plan for scheduling parents is to invite you to be part of our Baby/Toddler Teaching Team during one session each Sunday morning (Sunday School or Worship) for one month during the coming year. Being in the same room for a full month lets children get to know the parent volunteers, and lets the parents feel comfortable and successful.

Each month we have a different theme, guiding children in positive experiences related to simple but important truths about God and Jesus. Your one month of ministry will be a time of enjoyable growth as a parent, because everything we do with babies and toddlers at church is also beneficial for parents to do with little ones at home during the week.

One of our committee members will be calling you in a few days to see if you'll be able to take advantage of this opportunity and to schedule the month when you'll be sharing your love, and God's love, with little ones.

If there's a month when you really would prefer to serve, call (insert name and phone number) right away. The schedule does get built on a first-come, first-served basis.



## Teen Helpers

Preteens and teens (both male and female) often express an interest in helping care for little children. And many times, these young people are truly liked by energetic toddlers. Be aware that some churches choose not to use any nursery staff under the age of 18 for liability reasons, or to limit their participation to toddler rooms. However, many churches have planned very effective ways of training and using youth in the nursery—always as helpers, and never as the primary caregivers.



**LARGE CHURCHES:** Since it is critical for youth helpers to maintain contact with their own peer group, larger churches (those with multiple services) may want to require teens to serve during a session that does not conflict with their own youth program and to make attendance in the youth ministry a prerequisite to service in the church nursery.



**SMALL CHURCHES:** Smaller churches may want to limit a youth helper's length of service to one to three months so that the helper does not miss out on youth church programs.

Here are some guidelines for setting up a youth helper program:

The first step to establishing a successful program is to share the vision with the adults currently working in the nursery and with key parents who utilize the nursery for their own children. It is critical that your current team members see youth helpers as "leaders-in-training" and that they buy into their roles as shepherds to both the older students and the young children. Parents must be convinced that you have thought through and taken the necessary precautions to ensure that teen helpers will enhance the ministry and in no way diminish the safety and health standards of your church nursery.

Second, determine with your church staff the minimum age and grade level for youth helpers and any other needed requirements, such as get parent's permission to participate, regularly attend church youth classes and worship services, attend a specified number of training classes, and be recommended by a youth supervisor/leader in the church. Ask youth to complete the nursery application form (see p. 11).

Third, plan one or more training classes for potential youth helpers and their parents. Including parents in the classes is helpful not only because it acquaints the parents with what their children are doing, but it also encourages parents to follow up at home on the training.

At the training classes, provide job descriptions, explain nursery procedures and safety guidelines, tour the nursery and include a time of child-care training. (Several sample worksheets are provided on page 25.) Emphasize that the job of a youth helper is an important task because of the way in which early experiences influence young children and because of the service youth helpers provide to the church family. Clearly state to helpers how important it is that they focus on children, and not on other helpers in the room.

In addition, explain that youth helpers should never pick young children up. Infants require special handling and their parents may be concerned about seeing their baby carried by a young teen. For the same reason as the warnings about the potential physical harm of overloaded backpacks, toddlers are often too heavy for teens who are developing physically themselves. In either case, youth helpers should be encouraged to get down on the floor to care for and play with young children. The babies will love having someone at their level and the adult workers are often reluctant to get down on the ground.





## Teen Helper

### Job Description

**TASK:** To assist adult leaders in providing loving care for toddlers.

**TERM:** Three months, September through November

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Be present in the nursery from 11:00 A.M. until 12:15 P.M. each Sunday morning.
- Follow the directions of the adult leader to provide physical and emotional care for children.
- Read the Nursery Handbook to become familiar with our nursery guidelines.
- With a parent, attend one training event.



## Recommendation

\_\_\_\_\_ has applied to

- Work as a teen helper in the church nursery.
- Be placed on a recommended baby-sitter list.

1. How would you describe this young person's

\*Ability to make friends with young children?

\*Ability to follow adult leadership?

\*Relationship with God?

2. Do you have any reservations about this person's ability to work with babies and toddlers?

*Thank you for your help. Please return this form to the Director of Christian Education. Your comments will be kept confidential.*

## Worksheet #1

Answer these questions:



### Why is it a good idea to...

make sure children don't share bottles, crackers or other snacks?

---

---

let the adult leader know if you bring a child in or out from the outdoor play area?

---

---

ask the adult leader before offering crackers to a child?

---

---

close all gates to the outdoor play area when you first go out?

---

---

## Worksheet #2

Fill in the blanks with words from the box.

shoes	get down
eat	imitate
fussy	sand
toddlers	make fun
Never	alone

1. Try to distract a \_\_\_\_\_ toddler by refocusing his or her attention on a new activity.
2. Be sure never to leave a child \_\_\_\_\_ in the outdoor play area.
3. Please \_\_\_\_\_ before you come to the nursery. Crackers are for the children.
4. Empty \_\_\_\_\_ from a child's \_\_\_\_\_ before coming inside.
5. Please remember not to \_\_\_\_\_ of a child's speech or \_\_\_\_\_ what they say.
6. When a child needs your attention, \_\_\_\_\_ on the floor with him or her. \_\_\_\_\_ pick up a child of any age.



## Worksheet #3

Draw lines to match each question with the appropriate answer.

What should you do if:



1. Michael and Noah both want the same truck?
  2. your friends come to visit you in the nursery?
  3. Kimberly throws sand?
  4. Adam cries when he first comes into the room?
  5. Jonathan needs his diaper changed?
  6. Michael quits playing with the blocks and goes to ride on the horse?
  7. Natalie, who has been asleep in a crib, wakes up and starts to cry?
- a. Pick up the blocks unless someone else begins playing with them right away.
  - b. Tell your friends you'll talk to them after church.
  - c. Reassure him that his parents will come back. Then invite him to play with you.
  - d. Distract one child with a different toy.
  - e. Say, "You need to play with the sand, not throw it."
  - f. Quietly ask the leader what to do.
  - g. Talk to her; check the sign-in sheet to see if she needs a comfort toy or bottle. If she continues to cry, ask the adult leader what to do.

(Answers: 1-d; 2-b; 3-e; 4-c; 5-f; 6-a; 7-g.)

## Guidelines for Recruiting

Prayerfully prioritize your prospect list. Then personally contact each prospect with a letter or phone call. Personalize the letter or call by telling the recipient the purpose of your contact—"I'm calling because I'd like you to think about becoming a part of our nursery team." Then describe why you think the person would be able to contribute to the nursery ministry—"I've noticed that you are really patient with young children and you seem to really know what they are like" or "You're such a friendly person and easy to get to know, and I thought you would be especially good at building relationships with the parents of the nursery children."

- Briefly explain what commitment you are asking for—"I'd like you to think and pray about being a caregiver in the toddler room during the worship service. There are two other adults you'll be working with and 10 to 12 children. Our caregiver teams serve for six months at a time." Add any other pertinent details.

- Always end your contact with an invitation for the prospect to observe the nursery ministry in action before making a final decision (be sure the staff being observed are doing a capable job) and encourage the prospect to take time to prayerfully consider your offer. Follow up with the contact about a week later.

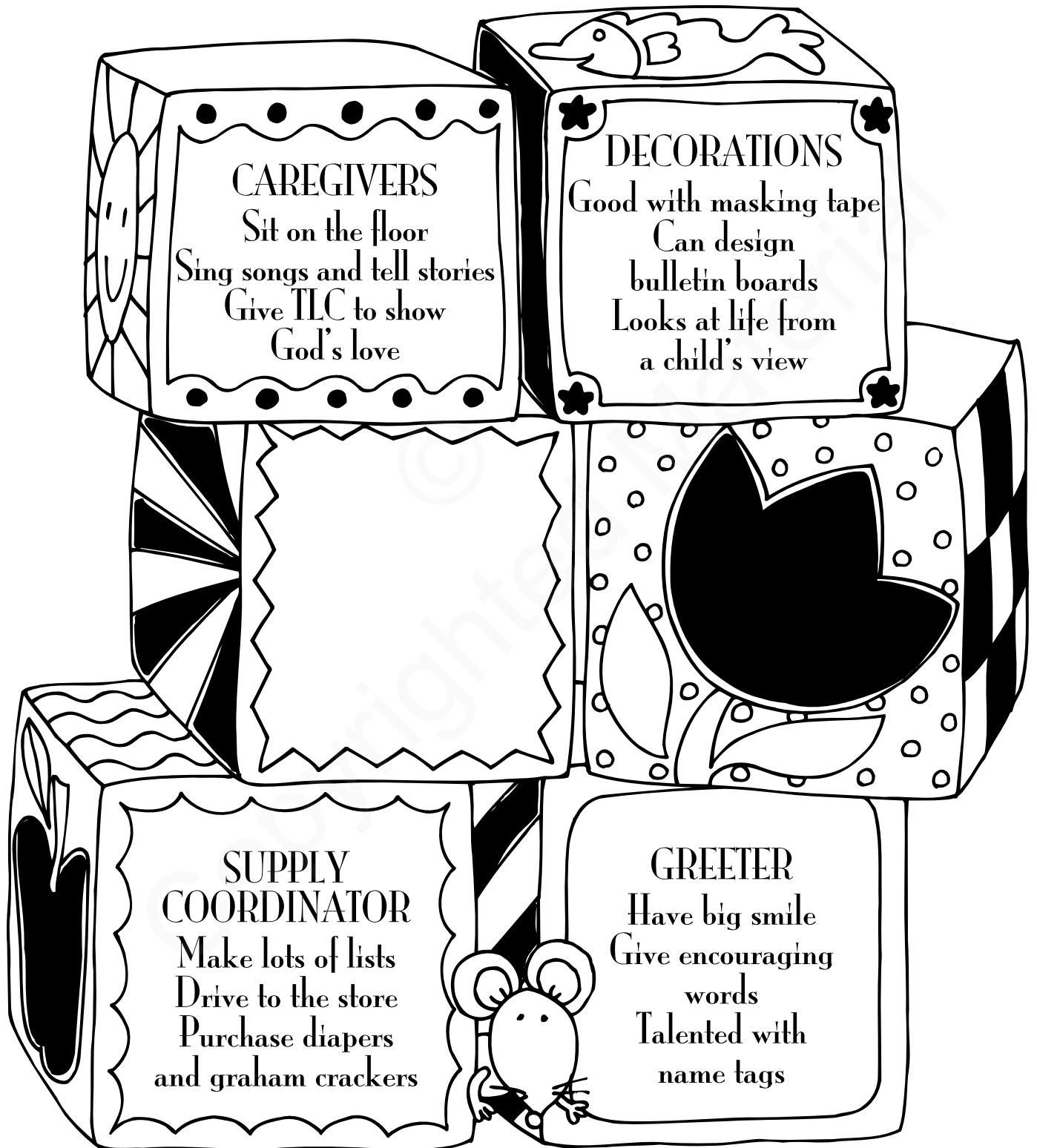
If the answer is yes, be ready to offer orientation and training to help the new staff member make a good beginning. (If the answer is no, thank the prospect for taking the time to consider the ministry.)

- Sample recruiting flyers and inspirational clip art to put on your own letters are provided on the following pages. If you choose to send a form letter to your prospects, add a personal note to the letter. Avoid placing recruiting announcements in church bulletins or newsletters; it's best to recruit from a pool of people who have been recommended to you or who have demonstrated the characteristics of the kind of caregivers you're looking for. General announcements of "We need help in the nursery" give the impression that your ministry is desperate for volunteers because no one is really very interested in it.

- If someone unknown to you or other members of your church requests to help in the nursery, sincerely thank the person for his or her offer. Explain that all nursery staff are required to have regularly attended the church for a minimum of six months to a year (or whatever your church's policy specifies). Be ready to suggest a way the person might help in the nursery until the time requirement has been met (send birthday cards to children, decorate bulletin boards, etc.) or another area of service in the church.



# Here's What We Need to Build Our Nursery Staff!



# Plant a seed of faith!

Lots of little plants are waiting to be cared for in our nursery. You have been recommended as someone who is capable of helping a little child grow by joining our team of faithful “gardeners.”

- I'd love to be a gardener in the nursery!
- I can't be a gardener in the nursery right now (but call me in a few months).
- I'm gardening in a different plot right now!



I prefer to work in the garden of the

- Sprouts (Babies)
- (Toddlers)
- Any garden is fine!

## Touch the hand of a little one!



*We've heard that you'd be a good person to help us provide safe and loving care for the children in our nursery. Hands-on opportunities for ministry in the nursery include giving hugs, playing with toys, clapping hands, turning the pages of a book, and giving gentle back pats!*



*If you can give us a hand, please call*

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## Top 5 Reasons to Join Our Nursery Staff

5. Smiles are given away for free.

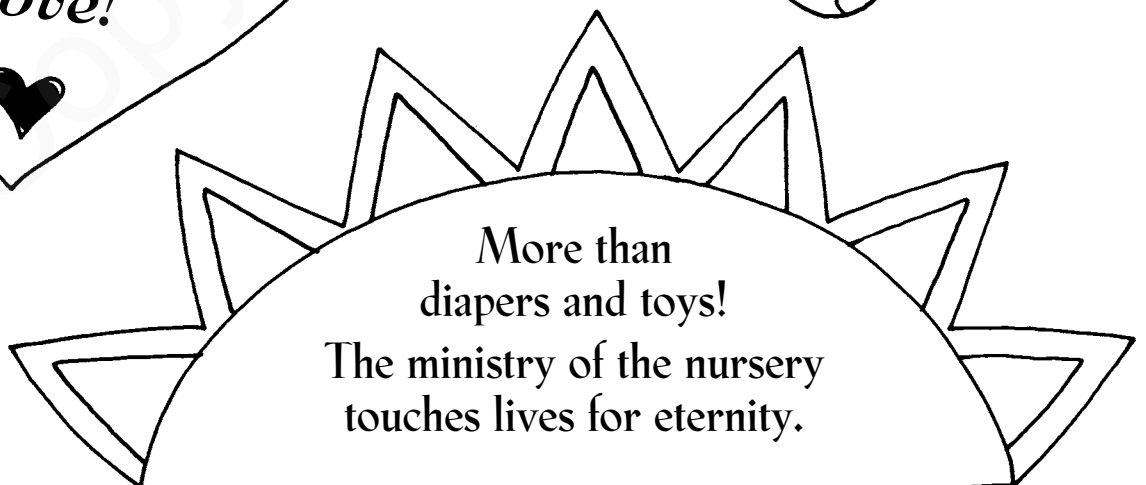
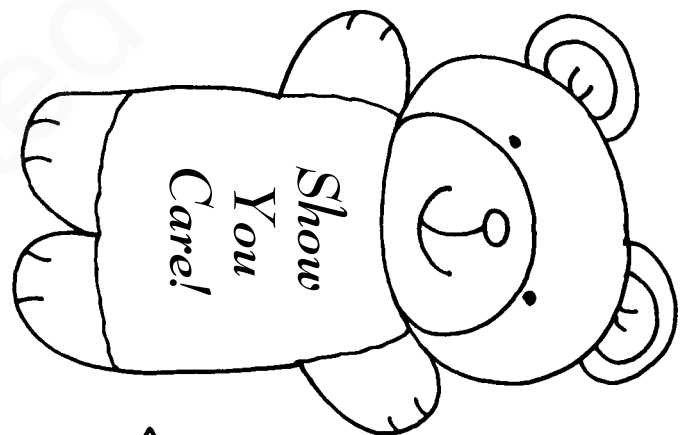
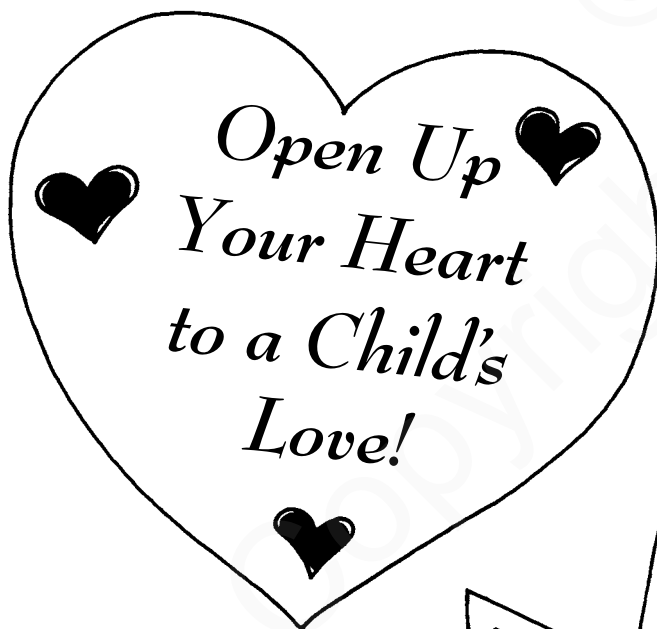
4. You'll see kids growing right before your very eyes.

3. Babies and toddlers will think anything you do, say or sing is perfect.

2. You'll make lots of friends.

1. And the number one reason to join our nursery staff:

You'll be following Jesus' example of welcoming children to the family of God!



## An A for Appreciation

One of the best ways to recruit nursery staff is to keep the staff you already have! Here are some tips for ways to offer support and appreciation to your caregivers.

**Plan ahead for substitutes.** Agreeing to help in the nursery should not mean that a person can never take a needed break. Maintain a list of names and phone numbers of people who have already agreed to serve as nursery substitutes.



**LARGE CHURCHES:** In a large church, the nursery coordinator may need to be the keeper of the list, ensuring that a variety of people are called.



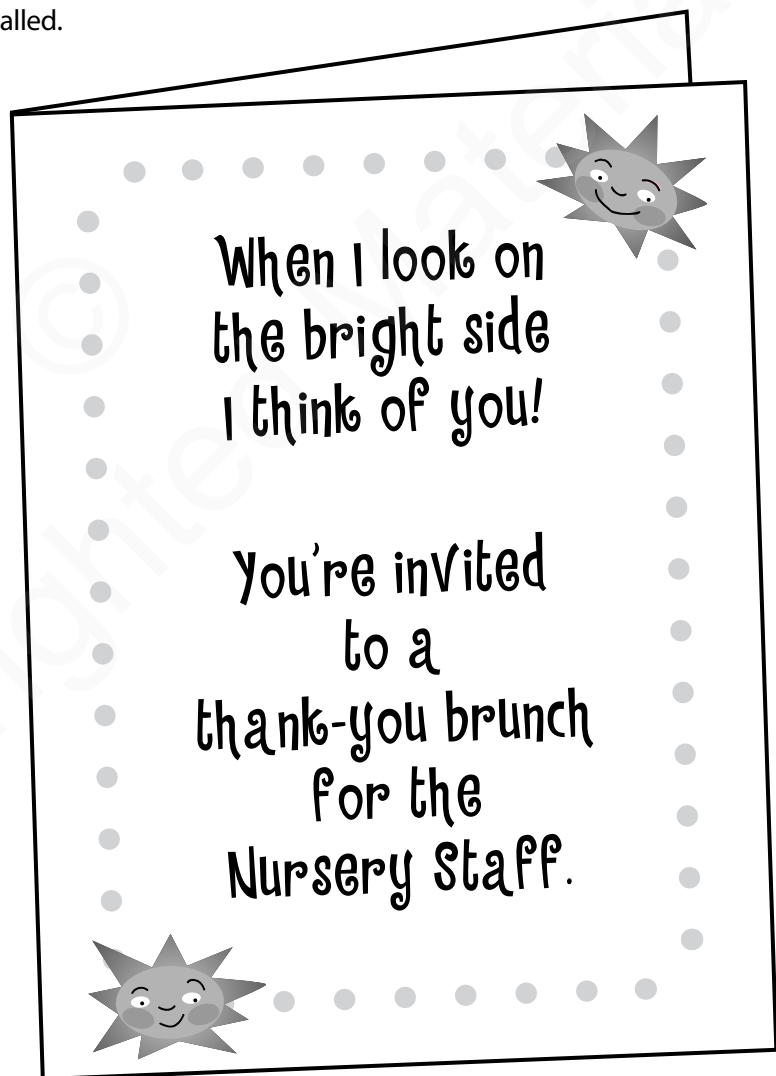
**SMALL CHURCHES:** In a small church, you may distribute the list to the caregivers themselves, requesting them to notify you or another supervisor whenever a change is made.

**Write personal notes.** Periodically write a personal note of thanks to a nursery staff member. Depending on the size of your staff, make a plan to regularly write at least one note each week or month. Thank the person for a specific action he or she has demonstrated. For example, "I've noticed that you are especially good at calming fussy babies. They love to hear you sing" or "I appreciate your buying and sorting the snacks without any reminders." Or mention the number of families that were able to experience a worship service because of the volunteer's presence in the nursery.

**Plan church-wide features.** Several times a year, list the names of the nursery staff in a church bulletin or newsletter. Or take their pictures and display them on a bulletin board. Some churches include nursery staff in their regular teacher dedication or recognition events (dinners, lunches, pizza nights to which all family members are invited, etc.).

Give award certificates or gifts. Thank-you gifts can be purchased or homemade. Refrigerator magnets, mugs or plants will express appreciation to a volunteer. Give small gifts at the end of a volunteer's term of service, on his or her birthday or at holiday times. Or ask a nursery parent to make a half-dozen muffins or bag of cookies to give a nursery worker who has cared for his or her child recently.

Purchase or make your own certificates to give at the end of each volunteer's length of service. Sample certificates are provided on the following pages.





Thanks for your help!



Wee Care Certificate  
Awarded to



\_\_\_\_\_

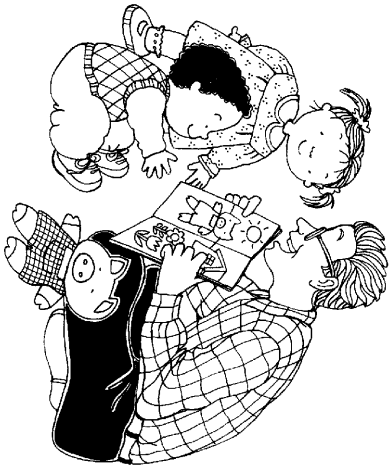
For

\_\_\_\_\_





If smiles and hugs  
were worth money,  
you'd have  
spent a million!



Thanks for investing  
in the lives of our little ones!

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My mommy told you thank-you today for taking care of me. I wish I could talk, too! Here's what I would say.

I'm glad you noticed how much fun I was having playing with the blocks! First, I built towers. But then I banged the block on lots of things—the ball, the car, the wall, and even your leg! (I'm sorry that hurt you. Thanks for giving me a train to bang on instead!) You let me figure out how a block works! I learned a lot!

Whenever I come into the room, you smile at me. It makes me feel so good to see you! Sometimes I'm a little sad that my mom is leaving, so I can't smile back. But deep inside, I know you care for me. Thank you.

I heard you talk about Jesus today. I don't exactly know who He is, but if He loves me as much as you do, He must be pretty special!

I love you!





One, two, we thank you.

Three, four,  
we love you more.

Five, six and seven,  
the reward's in heaven.

Eight, nine and ten,  
come back again!

## FAVORITE FRIEND AWARD

TO \_\_\_\_\_

FOR \_\_\_\_\_



## Training Your Nursery Staff

Every nursery caregiver can benefit from one or more training events. New caregivers need basic instruction in what their jobs are (give them a copy of the job description on page 18), and how the nursery program functions (give them a copy of your nursery brochure or handbook).

Even experienced workers need to be made aware of procedure updates, program improvements and changing health and safety guidelines. Most caregivers also feel a renewed sense of dedication and excitement about their nursery ministry after meeting for even a brief time of training and inspiration.

Each training event (at least once a year) should include a brief focus on the importance of the nursery ministry, reminders and updates about nursery procedures and tips for interacting with babies and toddlers. Show a training video (such as *How to Build a Quality Nursery Program* which comes with the free downloadable resource mentioned on page 5) designed to help nursery caregivers understand how best to provide a safe and enjoyable program for babies and toddlers. You may wish to provide training in a particular skill, based on one of the training articles found in this book:

- "Communication with Nontalkers," page 116
- "Crying: Understanding a Baby's Cry," page 117

- "Welcoming a Baby to the Nursery," page 143
- "Take a Look at Babies" and "Take a Look at Toddlers," pages 113 and 114
- "Teaching Babies About God," page 129
- "Extending Your Nursery Ministry," page 125
- "Why Use Curriculum?" page 119

The nursery coordinator can provide the training, or ask a knowledgeable person in your church or community.

Help build relationships among the nursery staff by providing name tags, offering refreshments and asking participants to answer a few ice-breaker questions such as, "What's your favorite thing to do with a baby or toddler?" or "What's the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word 'baby'?" Ask each worker to answer this question from the perspective of a particular child in your nursery: "What is the purpose of our church's nursery?"

Personally meet with any new staff who are not able to attend a training event, giving them a copy of your nursery brochure or handbook and a link to the video to watch at home.



## Health and Safety Guidelines

Nothing speaks louder to parents of your loving care for their children than clean and safe rooms. While following health and safety guidelines does not guarantee a quality nursery program, an effective nursery ministry cannot function without them.

Well thought-out health and safety procedures benefit everyone connected to the nursery. Babies and toddlers and their parents are, of course, the prime beneficiaries: In a safe environment that is planned just for them, young children are encouraged to learn and grow. Secure in the knowledge that everything possible is being done to keep their child safe and happy, parents can take advantage of time away from their children to build their own relationships with God and others in the church family.

Nursery caregivers also find that making health and safety issues a priority makes their service a positive experience. For example, a nursery without a firm well-baby policy may find their caregivers (not to mention other children) are frequently exposed to illnesses. Establishing guidelines for specific nursery procedures (checking in, feeding, diapering, emergencies, etc.) also helps the staff to know and fulfill what is expected of them. Other safety guidelines (child/adult ratios, etc.) protect caregivers in the event of a complaint.

In discussing health and safety procedures with caregivers and parents, communicate instructions with a positive approach. For example, "In order to help our nursery be the best it can be, these are the health and safety guidelines we follow" or "So that you can concentrate on caring for and enjoying the babies in our nursery, here are the health and safety procedures we've established." Frequently thank parents and caregivers for their attention to these issues.

Occasionally a parent or caregiver may question the need for a certain health procedure. Acknowledge the person's feelings ("It does seem like it takes a lot

of time to put on the gloves just to change a diaper") but reaffirm the need for such a procedure ("Using the gloves means that no one has to worry about a child or caregiver being exposed to an illness while changing diapers").

Health and safety guidelines are best developed by a committee of people. Many churches have found it helpful to create a nursery committee which meets several times a year, or more frequently if needed, to establish the policies and procedures of the nursery program. This committee may be made up of several parent representatives, several people who serve in the nursery, a member of the church staff or governing body who is charged with the responsibility of the nursery program, a person who works in a daycare or preschool who is familiar with state regulations for licensed facilities and a health professional (doctor, nurse, etc.). Some churches request that a lawyer familiar with church liability issues review their health and safety procedures. (If your church has a licensed infant/toddler facility, state health regulations should be adhered to any time the nursery is in use.) You may also request that a consultant from your state's Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) or your state's agency responsible for licensing daycare facilities visit your nursery to evaluate the facility for safety and health hazards.

It is most helpful if the people on this committee are familiar with all of the information provided in the Organizing Your Nursery section of this book.

After establishing policies and procedures such as deciding on the number of staff members and their duties, how the nursery will be staffed, necessary equipment and supplies, and how children will be greeted and dismissed, this committee meets to evaluate and modify procedures and guidelines as necessary.

