



Parent Handbook

Neighborhood Ministries is a ministry of First United Methodist Church of Lakeland, Florida. The Neighborhood Ministries Council provides direction and guidance for Clubhouse, Club Christ and Camp NHM programs. The Staff Parish Relations Committee of First United Methodist Church hires the Directors of Neighborhood Ministries. All paid staff are employed by First United Methodist Church.

Mission Statement: The mission of Neighborhood Ministries is to share the love of Jesus Christ with the community by providing a safe, recreational, and spiritual experience.

Goals:

1. To foster a **safe** Christian environment in which children and youth can grow spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and socially, with Jesus Christ as our example.
2. To have open communication with the children, youth and their parents, by means of written and/or verbal correspondence.
3. To provide a nutritious snack, daily, that has two food groups.
4. To work together and play together as a Christian family.

Clubhouse:

After School Programming for Kindergarten through 5th grade students from the hours of 2:00 to 5:00pm.

Club Christ:

After School Programming for 6th through 12th grade students from the hours of 2:00 to 5:00pm.

Camp NHM:

Summer Programming for rising 1st grade through rising 6th grade students from the hours of 8:00am to 5:00pm.

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Registration Requirements:

1. The child must be in kindergarten through 5th grade to be a part of Clubhouse or a youth in 6th to 12th grade to be a part of Club Christ.
2. The child must be a rising 1st through rising 6th grader to be a part of Camp NHM.
3. All enrollment forms must be filled out and notarized (if applicable).
4. Attendance at a mandatory parent meeting (Parent Orientation), or a meeting with the Directors if registration to the program occurs after the start of the school year.

Hours of Operation: (Exceptions being some Holidays and when school is not in session). Please refer to our website for breaks in programming:
firstumc.org/neighborhood)

School Year

Clubhouse → Monday-Friday from 2:00pm - 5:00pm.

Club Christ → Monday-Friday from 2:00pm - 5:00pm.

Summertime

Camp NHM → Selective Weeks, Monday-Thursday from 8:00am - 5:00pm

Fee:

There is no fee to attend any of the programs. Please remember that we are a ministry of First United Methodist Church and we exist because of donations. If you can afford to give something, please do.

Reporting Child Abuse:

Our staff is required by law to report any suspected abuse to the Director, the Senior Pastor, and the Department of Children and Families.

Discipline Policy:

1. Age appropriate, constructive, trauma informed disciplinary practices are used for children and youth in care.
 - a. Discussion with the child/youth about appropriate behavior.
 - b. "Time Out" from ongoing activity.
 - c. Consultation with parents to seek answers or understanding of the problem. If the problem is not resolved by these means, temporary or permanent suspension may be enforced for the well-being of the program.
2. Children/ Youth are not subjected to disciplinary actions which are severe, humiliating, or frightening.
3. Discipline will never be associated with food or toileting issues unless it infringes on the rights of others, and if so, refer to No. 1 above.

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Behavior Management Policy:

For Clubhouse, behavior is managed by a “light” system. Lights are given out based on behavior: Blue light= no problems; Green light= a warning was given; Yellow light= a warning was not heeded, and a rule/expectation was broken; Red light= repeated problems with behavior that day despite multiple interventions. Each day all children start with a blue light with the goal of remaining on blue for the remainder of the day.

Light changes have consequences at the end of the school day. Each child receives points (positive reward incentive to be used to purchase items at our monthly point stores) based on which light they end the programming day with. Blue light= 4 points; Green light= 3 points; Yellow light= 2 points, Red light= 1 point. Being on Red light also requires a discussion between Directors and parent/guardian, along with sitting out on the next fun activity and completing a “Red Light Reflection” activity. Physical violence is not acceptable, so hitting is an automatic red light change.

Two consecutive days of being on red light will result in a 1-day suspension. Three automatic red light changes, in a week, will result in a 1-day suspension. For children that exhibit a pattern of misbehavior despite multiple disciplinary interventions, will require a meeting with the Directors to discuss further involvement in our program.

For Club Christ, we feel the youth are more responsible and aware of the rules and expectations. Behavior is managed through a “mark” system that resets at the beginning of each week. The youth start with a blank slate and if they break a rule or expectation then they are given a mark. The marks accumulate throughout the week. Directors will speak to the parent/guardian of the youth when they receive a mark.

Consequences for getting 3 marks in one day will result in a suspension from programming the following day. If a youth receives 5 marks throughout a week, then they will be suspended from programming. Hitting will result in getting a mark.

There is a zero-tolerance policy regarding youth fighting. Should a youth “bully” or pick fights and arguments with other youth, s/he will be asked to leave the program for the safety and happiness of the others. The consequence of any physical fighting is an automatic suspension from the program with an apology upon return. A meeting may also be required by the youth involved and their parents to resolve the situation. For youth that exhibit a pattern of misbehavior despite multiple disciplinary interventions, a meeting with the Directors will be required to discuss further involvement in our program.

***We have a zero-tolerance policy for any verbal or physical attack on staff and volunteers. Children or youth who become verbally or physically violent with staff and volunteers will have to leave programming that day and be suspended from programming. They may return from programming after a meeting is held with Directors, child/youth, and the parents/guardians about their ability to continue in the program.**

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Student Code of Conduct & Expectations:

Tenet...	Behavior Expectations ...	Policies...	Consequences/Next steps...
#1 Respect God, His house, & everything/everyone in it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the spaces in the F-building as they are INTENDED to be used! -Clean up after yourself when you are done using a space (snack time, crafts etc.). -Return materials back to where they belong. -Be kind & mindful of the furniture and items in the F-building. -Remain seated with seatbelts on for the entire ride on buses. -Use appropriate language and volume while on the bus (no screaming). -Bathrooms are for pottying...nothing else! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eating allowed in approved locations ONLY! -Climbing, sports, & running around are outside time activities. -Use games & game tables as they are intended. -Classrooms are for crafts & schoolwork. -Chapel is for praise/worship. -No climbing up the slides. -Follow all directions given on the bus. -No food and drinks on the bus! -Students will use the bathrooms one-at-a-time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Staff verbal redirections and reminders of expectations. -Reset time and reflection of expectations. -Light change or mark. -Suspension from Bus
#2 Treat others the way you would like to be treated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use kind language-no screaming. -Create a safe space for all people. -Use respectful appropriate language toward staff & volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No using profanity or name calling. -No roasting, intimidating, or bullying behavior. -Threatening is not tolerated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Verbal redirections and reminders of expectations by staff. -Separation from peers to avoid further conflict. -Reset time/reflection→ "meta moment" -Light change or mark

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Tenet...	Behavior Expectations ...	Policies...	Consequences/Next steps...
#3 Always keep your hands and feet to yourself.	-No horseplay inside classrooms, lounge, game room, stairs, elevator. -Be aware of your body and surroundings to avoid accidents. -Do not push your way through staff members.	-No ninja moves or karate practice on peers. -Football is for the lawn & b-ball is for the gym...not INDOORS! -No retaliations. -Use your words and not your limbs.	-Hitting is a light change. -Separation from peer to avoid further conflict→ "Blueprint problem solving tool" -Loss of privilege/activity -Fighting is not tolerated and parents will be called, and students will be suspended. -Hitting staff or volunteers will result in suspension.

#4 Remember God loves you and so do we.	-Cooperate and follow staff directions. -Communicate needs or concerns to staff trusting that staff have your back. -Take responsibility for your actions and words.	-Staff want to help each student succeed while holding them accountable to their actions and behavior expectations. -We will forgive and extend grace to each other so there is room to grow.	-Verbal redirections and reminders by staff. -Light change/mark -Conversation with a ministry leader→ "mood meter" -Meeting with parent/guardian about further participation in our program.
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Non-Negotiable Rules:

***Running out of rooms/areas without permission** -being "out of area" is a safety liability. Students are expected to stay in areas of activity and cannot roam/wander on their own. If this is repeated behavior (3 times in one day) then the student will have to stay in Director's office until dismissal. Directors will speak with parent/guardian at pick up. If it is repeated behavior, the student will be suspended from programming consequently.

***Refusing to stay with the group** -if a student is refusing to return to the area or refusing to follow directions, it is a disruption to programming and a direct hazard to the safety of NHM staff and students. A student who refuses to rejoin a

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room/group activity when asked by staff, then the ministry leaders will be called. If the student continues to be uncooperative even with the directors, then the parent/guardian will be called immediately to come pick-up the student, and the student will be suspended the next day of programming consequently. If this is a repeated behavior and the student is not improving...then there will be further discussions with directors and parents/guardians about the student continuing to stay in our program.

***Leaving the building** -students are expected to stay inside the building unless programming has moved to an outside location. Students who walk out of the building or leave the premises while outside and refuse to follow verbal commands to return inside or on church property will result in Directors calling the parent/guardian to come immediately and pick up their student.

***Bus conduct** -students are expected to remain seated with the seatbelt buckled for the entirety of the bus trip. If a student refuses to remain seated or keep their seatbelt on, then the bus driver will pull over and call the parent/guardian to meet the bus and take their student home.

Dismissal Policy:

Dismissal starts at 5:00pm and ends at 5:15pm. Parents/guardians must pick up students or arrange for a person authorized on their enrollment forms to pick up students from Clubhouse, Club Christ, and/or Camp NHM between 5:00pm and 5:15pm daily. (Please note authorized persons must be at least 16 years of age to check out elementary students.)

OR

If students are above the second grade and it is indicated on the student's registration form, they will be permitted to walk home from Neighborhood Ministries (Clubhouse, Club Christ, and/or Camp NHM) programs. The staff of First United Methodist Church are not responsible for walking students after 5:00pm. Once a walking student has left the program, they are the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian. Please inform them of where to go and to leave the church grounds promptly

Early Pick-Up Policy:

We expect the students to stay for the entirety of programming time each day, however we understand there may be doctor appointments. On the rare occasion of an appointment, 4:30pm is the latest that a student can be checked out early. Neighborhood Ministries will not release students after 4:30. You will have to wait until 5pm when dismissal begins to pick up your student.

Late Pick-Up Policy:

When enrolling a student up for the program, each parent signs and returns an agreement stating they are aware that their student needs to be picked up or walk home by 5:30pm at the latest. This time is set due to the responsibilities that the staff have outside of work, such as classes, study groups, and dinner on campus etc., that make it necessary for them to leave at that time. The first

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offense will be a verbal confirmation that the parent is aware of the late policy, in conjunction with a signed form indicating they have been notified of their first offense. After 3 offenses, the parent/guardian will have to meet with the Directors to discuss their plan of how they are going to eliminate the problem of late pick-ups to keep their student/s in the program.

We understand that occasionally it is unavoidable to be late. In these situations, a phone call is greatly appreciated and necessary. It is always good to be able to tell the student/s that their grown-up is delayed but arriving shortly. If no approved adult has picked up the student/s and Directors cannot contact parent/guardian or anyone else on the emergency contact list or approved pick-up list by 5:45, then Law Enforcement Agencies will be called to assist in finding the parent. At that point, Law Enforcement will have full discretion of what the outcome with the child/ren should be. A possible solution could be to have the student/s remain with or be taken by the Law Enforcement Agency.

*Please make sure that we have updated contact information on file!

Attendance Responsibility:

It is the responsibility of Neighborhood Ministries to keep accurate attendance records. However, the student is not our responsibility if they do not arrive at our program. **Any day that the student arrives at the program it is understood that the student will remain until dismissal.** It is helpful for the staff to know if a child is going to be absent from programming that day. If for some reason the parent/guardian decides to remove the child/youth from the program, it would be helpful to let the Directors know as soon as possible so another child/youth can be given the opportunity to take part in our program. If our child/youth is unable to attend the program consistently, we will be talking to you regarding your wishes to remain on the enrollment list. Excessive absences become a problem when there are other children waiting to come into the program. If your child has more than 10 days of absences accumulated in a semester, you will receive a call to verify that you still wish to have him/her in the program. If you still wish to have your child continue in the program, we will work with you to gain faithful attendance. Should absenteeism (without cause) continue to be a problem, we will withdraw your child/ren from the program.

Additionally, children should not attend Neighborhood Ministries after school programming if that child or youth has not attended school that day due to illness or suspension. Occasionally, exceptions are made when a child has gone to school for part of the day but left early for an appointment. These situations are handled on a case-by-case basis and are left to the discretion of the Directors and staff.

In the situation where Neighborhood Ministries is responsible for picking your child or youth up from school, you must notify the Directors or Administrative Assistant if they will not be attending. You can easily email the leadership team or leave a message by calling 686-0855. Failure to notify us in advance of your

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child/ren's absence causes a great deal of strain on our bus drivers, making them wait an extensive time for a student who is not coming, and thus making them late for other schools on the bus route. Occasionally drivers arrive to schools for one or two students who are not attending programming that day wasting gas and time. We ask that you keep this in mind. Two uncommunicated absences will result in a one-day bus suspension, meaning the student may attend programming the following day but will not be able to ride the bus. If uncommunicated absences continue, parent/guardians will be asked to attend a meeting with the Directors to discuss their ability to continue in the program.

Contagious Illnesses:

Any child who contracts chicken pox, head lice, pink eye or any other contagious illness, may be asked to provide a written note from a physician (stating that s/he is no longer contagious) before re-entering the program. Please also be considerate and do not send your sick child/youth. Please inform the Directors or Administrative Assistant if a child/youth will be absent due to a contagious illness.

Offering:

Each week your child/youth is exposed to praise time and chapel, where a different speaker delivers a message. We have made it a point for the child/youth to be aware of children and youth in need. Therefore, at each Chapel service we will be taking up an offering for Residing Hope (formerly known as The Florida United Methodist Children's Home). Thank you for helping us make a difference!

Cell Phone/Technology Policy:

We understand that parents want their child/ren to have cell phones for communication purposes. While children are in our care, parents can always go through NHM leadership team regarding communication with their child/ren. We do plan fun events, so we ask students not to be on their devices during programming time but allow them to be on their devices in their free time, if they have no homework. Cell phones/tablets are not allowed to be used during Chapel programming on Tuesdays and Tutoring time on Thursdays. If they are on their devices, then Directors will take the device and return it to the parent/guardian at dismissal time. If there is a consistent pattern of not listening or respecting the rules, then Directors will have discussions with the parent/guardian requesting for support at home regarding the devices.

Let's Keep in Touch:

The Neighborhood Ministries Program staff will sometimes send messages via our Text-in-Church tool or email. Notices also may be mailed, handed out at dismissal, or even communicated to you over the phone. Also, please feel free to contact the Directors, Administrative Assistant, or talk to any staff members if you have any questions.

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Contact Information:

Sean Hults, Co-Director	686-0855 ext. 242	shults@firstumc.org
Eina Dorado, Co-Director	686-0855 ext. 230	edorado@firstumc.org
Ivelisse Arman, Admin Assistant	686-0855 ext. 212	iarman@firstumc.org

Opportunities For Families:

You, your family, and your friends are invited to fellowship, worship, and experience Christian education opportunities with us!

Worship Opportunities:

- **8:15am- Sanctuary Service.** (The best of traditional worship is presented in a new way with a fresh new approach to time-honored hymns with a variety of styles of music.)
- **9:30am- Fellowship Center.** (A more contemporary, relaxed atmosphere with the worship music of today. *In-Person ASL interpretation Available*)
- **11am- Sanctuary Service.** (Traditional hymns with organ accompaniment are featured in this worship service as well as pieces from our various fine arts music groups.)
- **11am- The Current.** (A unique worship experience with contemporary worship music and settings. Communion is offered each Sunday.)

Our Ministries:

- Our Ministries are the place where you can find life-giving community for all stages of life. For more information visit: **firstumc.org/ministries**