

Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church Bus Ministry

I. Purpose of a Bus Ministry.

- A. To carry out the Great Commission
 - 1. Winning people to Jesus Christ
- B. To have any other reason, will not have God's blessings, it would be man's creation rather than God's.
- C. Wrong reasons include:
 - 1. To feel sorry for the children
 - 2. To have a bus ministry because others in your denomination or area has one.
 - 3. To please a member of your church who may strongly feel the church should have one.

II. Pros of having a Bus Ministry.

- A. To reach the unchurched children and their families and bring them to church.
- B. Attempt to boost your numbers in Sunday School, children's ministries, and youth.
- C. The process of influencing other family members through your ministry for children. (Reaching the parents through their children)
- D. Goal is to have "whole" families saved through the means of transporting them to church.
- E. Homes can be "transformed" through the means of winning them to the Lord.
- F. Riders can grow up to become workers and leaders in the church.
- G. Buses can be used for other departments, such as the youth, seniors, trips, and church events.

III. Cons of having a Bus Ministry.

- A. The cost of the actual bus, maintenance, fuel, and mechanical breakdowns. A bus ministry can be very expensive. The rewards should always outweigh the costs.
- B. Securing and maintaining a staff of workers. Workers can volunteer for the wrong reasons. They may be working because someone asked them creating a position rather than a calling.
- C. Training and motivating the workers to be consistent to the mission or vision of the church. Workers can become easily discouraged or may not share the same vision as the church. To be successful, you must have people who feel they are called to this type of ministry, not just doing it to help out the church.

- D. Worker burnout or overload. Not enough workers to cover emergencies or creating a rotation to allow others to spend time with their families, vacations, or even have time off.
- E. A bus ministry may prevent the church to become focused on their main goal and objectives set by their pastor.
- F. Problems with a person not able to implement discipline, protection, and consistent rules on the bus.
- G. A lack of guidelines to handle situations of discipline, opposite sex issues such as a young male driving home a female teenager or sitting in their driveway talking, boundary issues of touching or non-touching, verbal guidelines, and lack of permission slips from parents concerning children or teenagers.
- H. Lack of coordinating with the church on drop offs and pickups. The bus ministry should complement each department, not working against them.
- I. Wrong attitude of bus drivers towards children, church policy, and coordinating with the church.
- J. Inconsistent numbers, a lack of planning, or communication the day before reminding the parents the bus will be ready for them the next day.
- K. A lack of follow-up and record keeping for each rider.

IV. **Foundations.**

- A. Prayer. This may seem elementary but many ministries start up and often fail because it was based on their “own” feelings or thoughts rather than having God direct. The church and its operations should be God-led. This will eliminate many headaches, expenses, and the church’s reputation.
- B. Purpose. The purpose of the ministry should be very clear, having the support of the pastor and all the leaders of the church.
- C. The bus ministry should display love, compassion, and a willingness to serve others.
- D. The bus ministry must coordinate and complement with other departments within the church. What would profit the church to have a bus ministry if the departments are undersized and did not have a ministry or program ready for the riders when they arrive?
- E. The bus ministry is an extension of the church. The drivers and workers must be friendly, “Christ-like”, having patience, wisdom, and compassion for others.
- F. Visitations should be encouraged and planned. Visitations can be used to share the different ministries of the church, how can their church be of benefit to their family, discipline issues, and a way to connect with other family members.
- G. Develop a brochure on your bus ministry. It is a good idea to have a pamphlet or booklet explaining various church programs, pickup schedules, numbers to call for emergencies or pickup cancellations, weather-related guidelines, and whether the church will provide an all-call to parents regarding changes in pickup and delivery.

V. Wrong Motives.

- A. Someone donated a bus or monies to purchase a bus. Just because someone else believes the church should start a ministry is not a reason for them actually doing it. It should be a vision and outreach of the church.
- B. Influential member has insisted for a bus ministry to start. (Same reasoning as above) It is very easy for someone to “commit or say” you should be doing something without them actually having to sacrifice or do any work themselves.
- C. Some churches have got into the bus ministry because they thought it was the popular thing to do. It is probably less popular today than ever before.
- D. Some churches are involved in a bus ministry as an attempt to increase numbers. Attendance was their main motivator and factor. A bus ministry must be based on outreach and ministry, not numbers.

VI. Right Motives.

- A. The main goal is to have a bus ministry is to reach souls with the Gospel. If the bus ministry is successful and has maintained a good balance of workers and purpose, the numbers will take care of itself.
- B. Improving the image of the church and being a true Christian within your community. Displaying a true reflection of what a real Christian should look like can be a tremendous witness to others.
- C. Bringing healing and restoration within families within the community.
- D. Maintaining the right motive is important so that God can bless your ministry and church.
- E. The pastor, leaders, and membership must be for this ministry if it is to succeed.

VII. Before Starting the Bus Ministry.

- A. Survey your membership for securing workers and support.
- B. Have the blessings of your pastor and church leaders.
- C. Do your homework on the cost of the bus and upkeep.
- D. Contact other churches your size or a little larger who have a bus ministry. (Not mega churches) Ask them for the Pros and Cons of their ministry and whether they feel their ministry is successful. You can learn the hardships and mistakes from others.
- E. Outline a detailed guideline from background checks, where to place the children if they arrive before church, responsibilities and concerns, appropriate behavior and conduct, how to handle discipline, handbook and permission slips for parents, rotation of drivers and workers, and to maintain effective communication and cooperation with church leaders and bus ministry, target areas you wish to consider, materials you wish to distribute to parents and riders, and prayer.

VIII. Discipline.

- A. Some of the reasons why children misbehave are: boredom, lack of supervision on the bus, desire for attention, lack of respect, lost and need Jesus.
- B. Be prepared for the unexpected. Prepare yourself, spiritually, physically, and mentally.
- C. If you cannot control the situation, children will control you. This is why there is a need for supervision other than the driver, providing a curriculum for teaching and keeping riders busy through songs, bible teaching, memory verses, etc.
- D. Must have and maintain a set of rules such as no throwing items on the bus, everyone must be seated and in seat belts (if you have them), no cursing or trashing the bus, no obscene gestures or anything outside of windows, everyone must participate, and implement suspensions or other forms of discipline when needed.
- E. Have the rules pre-printed before your 1st pickup, communicate them with parents and children, as well as the discipline and suspensions.
- F. Think about seating assignments or if a child is acting up negatively towards the back of the bus, place them near the front and near supervision.
- G. Use wording that is appropriate to children, such as “when you behave this way, you are telling me that you do not want to ride on the bus anymore.” Or you can say, “we like you (as a person) but we do not like what you are doing. When you choose to stop_____, we will consider allowing you to ride with us again.” Again, reject behavior, not the child.
- H. **Never, never, never discipline a child secretly or by yourself.** Have a witness.
- I. Do not ridicule the child or make an example in front of other children.
- J. Be fair and impartial.
- K. Use a sense of humor as a way to offer solutions to correct the behavior.
- L. Don’t be or act like a kid to connect with your riders. You can be friendly, have a sense of humor, but can easily lose your authority.
- M. Be consistent and in control.

IX. Programs on the Bus.

- A. Can purchase an overhead projector or TV with programmable songs and videos.
- B. Provide a printout on songs and distribute. It is better laminated for reuse and less trash.
- C. Teach short choruses to bus riders.
- D. Memory verses can be used, written on either a marker or poster board, and can give a reward for those who learn them.
- E. Have a Bible Lesson. Somethings that is short and simple. One can tell a Bible story or have it in audio or visual form. Always make the salvation plan simple and easy to understand.
- F. Teach Lessons on Salvation, Baptism, prayer, giving, etc.
- G. Give reading assignments or memory verse to one person to share with the group next week. (they can read it if it makes them feel more comfortable)

- H. Can have a review question time while traveling home to answer questions from church.
- I. Can play games, such as guessing the word or phrase with a contestant giving certain word(s) to describe the phrase or word without saying the actual word or phrase. Another version would not use verbal words but use signs, point to different objects in the bus or people. The winner is the one who guesses the word or phrase first.
- J. Balloon blowing and popping. Choose only a couple of people to do this, one from each side of the bus with each section cheering their person on.
- K. Another game may be the sleeping game with everybody falling asleep for 1 minute. The winner is the one who seems to be the best sleeper(s).
- L. Another game is awarding the best side that is the quietest or best behaved. Everyone in that section receiving a piece of candy as the prize.

X. ***Things That Will Kill Your Bus Ministry.***

- A. No enthusiasm
- B. A lack of variation (same thing each week)
- C. Lack of control
- D. Lack of consistent pickup & workers
- E. False promises

XI. **Bus Rider Information.**

- A. Picking up children without personal information is very unwise. This information is for your protection as well as the children, contact information that can be used to contact parents in case of an emergency, mailing information, witnessing tool, and information to share with other department heads within the church for contact.
- B. Information should include:
 1. Name, address, birth date, age, school grade, parent's name, guardian's name (if applicable), phone numbers including cells, picture of the child, permission slip to allow their child to ride bus and attend church activities, previous church, etc.
- C. Use of this information:
 1. Gives which Sunday school class they will attend along with their teacher's name.
 2. Decision reports of salvations, baptism, etc.
 3. Mark their attendance so you can track faithfulness or decide to follow up with a phone call or visit at their home.
 4. Recognize them on their birthdays
 5. Allows you to know people's name. You can have a booklet that has their pictures with their name beside of the picture for quick reference.
 6. Allows other departments to visit with the parent's on other events and activities this age group may be interested in.
 7. Visitation to the parent's home (don't stay long) to gather information how your church can be a blessing to them or to ask for their needs.

8. Prayer requests needs to be a regular on the bus along with prayer. Pray before the 1st person is dropped off.

XII. **Bus Ministry Procedures.**

- A. The slide door must be shut before bus is in motion.
- B. All children must be seated before the bus moves.
- C. Stop at all railroad tracks.
- D. All drivers must have a CDL.
- E. All drivers must wear their seat belts.
- F. The bus should be locked when not in use, windows up, and bus cleaned out before using again.
- G. Keys are never left in the bus ignition.
- H. Someone else from the church must look around the bus and give the okay sign to the bus driver before leaving the church.
- I. Bus captains or helpers are responsible for everyone and their behaviors, including while they are attending Sunday school or other activities. Bus captains and/or bus drivers will handle the discipline of bus kids.
- J. Someone is responsible for making sure that all children are taken to their classrooms.
- K. Teenagers must not be allowed to take children to classrooms.
- L. Teenagers must either attend church or their age group. No running around or being in empty classrooms.
- M. Limit your bus route to as short of time as possible to make the bus ride more enjoyable.
- N. Do not pull away from the child's home until you see they are safely inside.
- O. Bus drivers must drive the speed limit or below.
- P. All unsafe driving by the bus driver must be addressed and reported.
- Q. Bus drivers and other attendants must report any critical incidents, such as an injury, fight, and discipline issues to the church pastor or someone in charge for reporting and record keeping purposes.
- R. No eating or drinking by bus drivers or workers. Snacks to the children will be at the discretion of the driver or attendance helpers.
- S. If a driver discovers they have an extra child that is on the bus, the bus driver must call the bus ministry director to have them picked up. Do not take them through the whole route, keeping them from getting back to their family.
- T. Do not make a practice of hugging children. Learn where to touch, such as on their back or perhaps doing a side hug. Children are affectionate but every worker should know the boundaries and to act in a Christian manner (one without question).
- U. Never let children sit in your lap where a false impression could be created.
- V. Never haul bus riders in your person vehicle alone.

- W. Coordinate times schedules so that children are not left unattended before service or after services. Be prompt on pickup and drop off so that children will not come into the classrooms or church late.
- X. If a bus driver is going to be late or cannot run their bus route, the driver must inform the bus ministry director to obtain a new driver and workers.
- Y. Spend time to review the quality of services, things you could do better, ideas to become more creative and plan a program for your next bus route.
- Z. Every bus driver and helper must be active in attending church. It is also a good practice to rotate bus drivers and helpers every other month or every two months to help these people sit in church, rest, and prevent burnout.

XIII. Reaching the Parents.

- A. The purpose of any bus ministry is to reach those who are lost. The focus can be on children but the ultimate goal should always to win the whole family to the Lord.
- B. You must believe you can win the whole family to the Lord.
- C. Never lose the reality that each child and parent will either spent time in Heaven or Hell.
- D. Develop and maintain a consistent relationship with parents. Bus drivers and/or helpers should make regular calls to parents informing them of upcoming events, asking if they have any questions about the church or bus ministry, and make a personal visit every 6 months or before.
- E. Set a goal to have one whole family won to the Lord and is actively attending your church.
- F. Pray for salvation of children, other siblings, and parents.
- G. If you have a bus ministry director, have them follow up with a phone call to the parents asking them how pleased they are with your services and whether they are aware of other services your church offers.
- H. Develop and encourage a “Parent’s Sunday” as a way to encourage parents to attend your church.

XIV. What Causes Workers to be Discouraged.

- A. Worn out/burnout without any relief from other workers.
- B. Feeling “trapped” in this ministry without any help.
- C. Doing this for the wrong reasons.
- D. I’ve done my time for this ministry”. Ready for someone else to take over.
- E. Low numbers on attendance from routes.
- F. You have lost your favorite bus riders.
- G. A lack of being able to control your passengers.
- H. The bus is worn out and needs repair without funding from the church.
- I. A lack of support from leaders and other department heads from the church.
- J. A lack of recognition from the pastor and other church leaders.

K. Trouble or difficulty with Sunday school teachers.

XV. **Protecting Children and Reporting Child Abuse.**

- A. We live in a terrible society where there is abuse. Abuse reporting is not an option. Individuals and churches have been held liable for not reporting incidents and you (individually) have a duty to report suspected instances. It is **not your duty to prove guilt** but only to report and provide safety for children.
- B. The church should provide a written policy, making every worker and driver aware of the reporting and screening.
- C. Every worker that is working with children must be screened!**
- D. There are times when people are falsely accused, such as being falsely accused of touching a child. This why it is very important to not be alone with any child.
- E. Listed below are some guidelines you should consider:
1. Have proper numbers to aid and assist workers to supervise children.
 2. Maintain written records.
 3. Report immediately to the bus ministry director/pastor **and** DHS on any suspected abuse of a child, whether this could have resulted from the home, other child, or worker in the church. This must include date, what took place, witnesses, or any other suspicious behaviors.
 4. Report immediately on any discipline incidents, accusations, threats by children, or statements of children stating they will sue if someone touches them.
 5. In a court of law, **remember that in most cases:** Your Word vs. Children's Word=Child Win, Your Defense=Written Records, and Your Word + Written Records vs. Child's Word = You Win!
 6. If a worker is accused, they must be immediately removed, must be aware of the accusation, and steps the church will take next.
 7. If you are reporting suspected abuse but do not know where the abuse occurred or if it exists, your duty is only to report suspicious nature or evidence of the child, such as excessive bruises, multiple incidents of breaking bones, cigarette burns, complaining about sitting still or hurting in their private parts, inappropriately dressed or acting out inappropriately with others, abandonment, malnutrition, etc. or if a child discloses information.
 8. Records must be kept confidential and kept indefinite.
 9. Keep the bus doors locked when not in use.
 10. Do not allow strangers onto the bus, speak to them throw the driver's window to prevent an intruder coming on the bus or to take a child.

XVI. Driver's File.

- A. A Copy of their license.
- B. Make sure it is a CDL and it is always current.
- C. Make sure that the driver meets age requirements from your insurance company.
- D. Maintain a yearly MVR on all drivers.
- E. Background check.
- F. Every driver must be provided a ministry driver manual and a signed document that they have read and agreed to the manual guidelines.
- G. Drug testing. All CDL drivers are aware of this. It is required by Federal Law.

XVII. Misc.

- A. A driver should be given some guidelines for benevolence requests.
- B. The church should provide a way of enlisting workers on a regular basis to help relieve the current workers and to handle emergencies.
- C. The church should provide a quarterly training for all bus workers.
- D. Make sure that all workers faithfully attend church services to maintain a spiritual balance in their life.
- E. Have a service where the bus directors/captains share some of the testimonies to the church.