



**BUS MINISTRY  
HANDBOOK**

## **Introduction**

God has used the bus ministry at Fairhaven as an effective means to see souls saved, disciplined and added to the church. Bringing people to church in large numbers has given thousands each year the opportunity to hear the gospel message. Furthermore, we mostly reach children, finding their hearts in the most impressionable time of their lives. Faith in God and His Word takes root in their hearts which could otherwise remain faithless and godless. God can use this foundation received at through the bus and the Sunday School programs throughout their lives.

The goals for bus routes are clear. First, the bus ministry is a soulwinning ministry of the church. Workers must not be distracted from their purpose. To be effective with these families we become involved in their lives on a social level, but we must be focused on reaching their souls for Christ.

The next goal is discipleship. We must give young Christians the tools to live for Christ. Once a young person or adult receives Christ as their Savior, the desire should be to start discipleship to mature them in their walk with the Lord.

The final goal is to bring the families into our church to be strong Christians in order that they can reach others like themselves. In a real way, this is the method that has built Fairhaven Baptist Church.

One of the aspects that has made our bus ministry function well is the place of the local church leadership in the ministries. The bus route is not the captain's route; it is directly under the supervision of our pastor. There are many guidelines established by our pastor that are important to the running of our routes. These guidelines are meant to be an asset to the building both of the route and the individuals serving under the leadership of the captain of the route. These guidelines are meant to be followed and steering from these guidelines should only be done after meeting and discussing other options with our pastor.

## **Chapter One: The Bus Captain Guidelines**

Each captain of a route is entrusted with the responsibility of following all the guidelines of our bus ministry and ensuring that the workers on his bus do the same. He must meet all the spiritual requirements for leadership set down by our pastor. He is expected to pray regularly for each rider, and he is to support the pastor in any changes made to the operation of the bus ministry.

### **THE BUS MEETING**

The function of our bus ministry and its success are greatly dependent on attendance to our Saturday morning bus meeting. The announcements affect the smooth running of each route and facilitate communication concerning upcoming events, etc. The meeting begins at 9 or 9:30 a.m. depending on the time of the year and is mandatory for captains, heads of buses, and all that are considered Saturday workers on the routes. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please communicate with our pastor that you will not be able to attend. Those that will be visiting on the routes are to go directly out to the route after the bus meeting is finished without stopping to run errands, eat, etc. This helps to keep us focused on the primary mission of the day, which is the visiting of the homes in our respective areas.

The captain and all workers must attend the Thursday workers' meeting held each week at 6:45 p.m. in the auditorium. There also will be other announced meetings that may occur at different times such as a bus breakfast, a summer cookout, or a planning meeting. These are scheduled to help encourage the bus workers and to give additional helps in organization or promotional ways.

### **THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BUS**

A spiritually-right bus captain is also a well-planned captain. The care given to the details of the route is a good picture of the importance he places on his ministry. Many opportunities to accomplish work for God are lost to the poor organization of the captains of the routes. Our service for God should be done right. The following is a list of important details a captain needs to oversee.

The captain should begin with an overall yearlong plan. A yearlong plan should include a tentative schedule for themes, contest, and activities for the individual bus. A copy of the yearlong plan for the upcoming year is due to the church office by December each year.

Attendance records should be complete and maintained all year round. Bus attendance should be turned in to Mrs. Damron. This can be done weekly, monthly, or yearly.

The captain needs to provide the Sunday school teachers with the correct information for the students, especially the addresses and birthdays of students below the age of six.

Insurance information for all shuttle cars needs to be turned in by the first of September each year and any time it changes during the year.

The captain should prepare a workers' assignment schedule so that there is always a schedule for each week. A copy of the schedule is due to the church office by the first of the month or when the last schedule ended. This schedule should include assignments for the Sunday bus program and weekly worker responsibilities.

It is very important for the workers to know what is asked of them. For this reason, captains are to be always current on the schedule, allowing the workers ample time to be adequately prepared.

A current copy of the bus visitation list, including names and addresses of the families, needs to be turned into the office twice a year if the captain turns in their attendance yearly.

The bus and all shuttle cars need to arrive at church on time. Being on time is a direct result of good planning. "A" route buses are due to the church by 9:30 a.m. "A" route shuttle cars must be in by 9:45 a.m. "B" route buses and shuttle cars are due by 10:30 a.m.

## THE COUNT ON THE BUS

An accurate count of all riders on the bus should be taken before the bus arrives at the church. The captain is to count only those riders who ride from his assigned area. He should never count riders or pick up riders outside of his area. Church members are not to be included in the count. The count needs to be turned in when the bus arrives at the church. Shuttle car drivers need to turn in their count when they arrive at the church as well. After the church service, the bus captain should take an accurate count to be assured that all the riders are on the bus before leaving the parking lot.

## ORDER ON THE BUS

It is the captain's responsibility to maintain order on the bus. He must organize his workers to operate a good program on the bus with activity, variety, excitement, and relevant Bible teaching. A well-prepared, interesting program will do most of the work to maintain order with the children, but the following is a list of minimum expectations for the route:

Children are to remain seated at all times while the bus is in motion.

The windows are only allowed to be lowered halfway, and nothing at all is to be sticking out of the window.

The aisle and the back exit door is to be clear of people, coolers, etc. Workers should not stand directly in front of the exit door.

Children should not talk while the teacher is teaching the lessons, verse, etc.

Proper discipline can and should be maintained on the bus, and workers should never have to yell over the noise of the children talking.

## DISCIPLINE ON THE BUS

The captain is expected to deal with the problems that arise with the bus riders. Ignoring the problem only makes the problem worse. The matter needs to be addressed immediately by the captain. If a child is not going to obey the captain, he will not behave in church. This child needs to be taken home. A captain can identify the spirit of teenagers before they arrive at church by testing their obedience on the bus. If they will not obey with a good spirit, they should be taken home.

The captain needs to go by the counseling room each Sunday after the service to see if any of his riders are there. The counseling room supervisor will provide a green slip for the captain to give to the parent. After a rider has been taken to the counseling room for the first time, he will not be allowed to attend church for two consecutive Sundays. Once a rider has been in the counseling room two times within six months, the rider is suspended from attending Sunday School until the bus captain meets with Pastor Damron and he decides that the child is ready to ride again.

All riders who are in 5th grade or above must have a Bible at church.

## SAFETY ON THE ROUTE

The bus captain has no greater responsibility than to maintain safety on the bus. Even though we are called to win souls, no Scriptural teaching can be done if the ride to and from church is not safe. The captain needs to be familiar with the vehicle driver's requirements for safety (chapters four and six), which includes checking, operating, and caring for the bus. The captain is responsible for making sure all the safety rules are upheld at all times by all the workers (especially the driver). There are no exceptions to safety rules.

## ACTIVITIES

The captains are at liberty to have independent activities as a bus route. The foremost important consideration regarding bus route activities is safety. The captain is responsible to keep the activity orderly and safe. (For instance, little children should always be separated from the older children during a candy scramble.) These independent activities need approval at least one week in advance by Dr. Jeff Voegtlin. Whenever a bus captain takes responsibility for the care of a child, it is considered an activity that needs to be communicated to Dr. Jeff Voegtlin (e.g., bus kids spending the night at the captain's home, etc.). Notification can be as simple as including the activity on the monthly schedule turned in to the office.

The bus captain must notify the pastoral staff immediately of any problems with the workers or bus riders. Guidelines for some specific activities are included in the "Special Events" section of this handbook.

## **Chapter Two: The Worker Guidelines**

It is a privilege to participate in the bus ministry. The contribution of each worker is a necessary part of the whole functioning of our ministry. Because of the importance of each individual's part, it is important to understand what is expected of each worker. All workers involved with the bus route are to follow and believe the standards upheld at Fairhaven Baptist Church. These standards involve the way we dress, the places we go, the associations we hold, etc. We are to be an example to the bus riders of a truly Christian lifestyle that is not hypocritical.

#### DRESS CODE FOR MEN

Unless you are instructed otherwise, a shirt, a tie, casual or dress pants, and casual or dress shoes (but not gym shoes) must be worn any time you are visiting or working on the bus. A suit coat is required for all services.

Some extended Sunday activities would make casual clothes more appropriate. The worker is expected to communicate to the captain each time a change is desired.

#### DRESS CODE FOR LADIES

The ladies are expected to dress in a manner ranging from nice casual to church clothes.

For some extended Sunday activities, it would be more appropriate if the ladies changed into culottes. This must be approved by the captain.

#### THE BUS SCHEDULE

A detailed schedule of each week's assignments will be given monthly to each worker by the captain. The lessons on the bus may follow a theme each month. Try to understand what is being taught and how your particular part in the program supports the teaching.

If circumstances should arise which would make you unable to fulfill your responsibility, find a substitute (within the group of workers already assigned to the bus) and contact the captain immediately.

Some of the items on the schedule will be explained in detail later in this handbook.

#### BUS MEETING

The Saturday 9 a.m. bus meeting is required for all Saturday visiting workers. Each worker is to be on time with a pen and day planner and be prepared to take notes. If a worker is absent from the 9 a.m. meeting, he must see his captain right away.

The bus meeting is designed so that the workers get out on the route as soon as possible on Saturday mornings. It is important that the workers go straight out visiting after the meeting without stopping at the store, or at their homes for breakfast, etc.

#### PRESENTING THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN

Presenting the gospel to children is a very important job. The Bible teaches that each person must become as a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Most children are very trusting individuals and will believe anything you tell them. There are four elements necessary for salvation: a knowledge of sin; a knowledge of sin's wages; the substitutionary atonement of Christ through His death and resurrection; and how to receive that salvation. While God alone can see their hearts, it is vital that the worker attempts to teach each of these concepts before asking them if they want to make a decision.

Two common problems arise in this area. First, the worker runs out of time to deal with the kids. Time must be made either right on the spot or some time later. Secondly, a child often comprehends only certain aspects of salvation and not the whole matter. Patience should be exercised. Children can be pointed the way to salvation and be led there over the course of a long time. The goal is a genuine salvation experience, not just a prayer with incomplete understanding.

## CONDUCT WITH THE CHILDREN

We practice a "hands-off" policy when dealing with children. The children are never to sit on laps of male workers when riding the bus.

Men are not permitted to pick up the children. In the event of a crying child, they should be directed to one of the lady workers. Only female workers are to give comfort or special attention.

Never use any form of physical discipline.

At times children may desire to have you swing them around. This is not allowed, and workers are cautioned to never pull on a child's arms to lift him up.

At no time should workers be alone with a child. It is important to keep a clear testimony which remains above accusations.

## BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

Almost every Sunday, there will be children riding the bus who have behavioral problems. These riders need to be directed to the captain. Workers are never to threaten a child, pull a child's clothes, push, shove, call a child names, etc.

On the other hand, problems that arise on the route need to be dealt with right away. The workers need to communicate with the captain as soon as any problem comes up.

If a child is in the counseling room, the worker is not permitted to take the child out. The bus captain is the only one permitted to remove the child.

## **Chapter Three: The Worker Responsibilities**

The idea of a program is to use every possible minute available to teach the children the truths of God's Word. A program also occupies the children's attention which keeps them out of mischief. The program should prepare the children to hear the sermon or the lesson on the bus and should also give the children something to look forward to which can encourage their faithful attendance. Individual captains may vary the type or order of the bus program, but some general guidelines for the workers are included in this section.

## NO DEAD TIME

One of the keys to keeping the attention of the children is to move from one item in the program to another with no time lapse in the middle. The program should vary from item to item with songs as fillers in between. Workers should cooperate to maintain the program. If there are breaks with nothing going on, the worker should not be surprised when the kids begin to talk and disrupt.

## MARKING HANDS

Every rider should have the bus number marked on the back of their hand. During push times it is important that a permanent marker is used. If a child will not have his hand marked, bring him to the captain immediately.

Once the bus has started the actual ride to church, the workers should check all hands on the bus to ensure that every child has the bus number properly marked.

## THE COUNT ON THE BUS

An accurate count of the children on the bus is important to be sure that all children get taken home.

As soon as the bus is on its way to the church, an accurate count must be determined. Count each rider and inform the captain of your total.

## VERSE

Being assigned the verse on the schedule involves a few things. First, make enough verse tokens as specified by your captain or head of bus and give them to the captain by Saturday morning. All the verses are to be taken from the KJV of the Bible. The most essential aspect of the verse token is legibility. Remember that most of the children do not read cursive writing. Vary the style and make them interesting. Try to grab the children's attention.

The next part of the responsibility involves a verse visual. This visual should be large enough to be read from the back of the bus.

Finally, be ready to teach the verse on the bus. Whenever the verse is taught, it is important to work for both memory and understanding. Workers should look up definitions of larger words and from those teach an accurate lesson about the verse. God can open the understanding of the children in later years if they have the Scriptures in their minds. The goal is also to see them understand and obey the Bible in their lives right now. The worker should concentrate on what the verse says (memorization), what it means, and how it can be helpful to the children.

## SONGS

Children memorize songs above remembering anything else. They will sing these songs all of their lives. The songs on the bus need to be Scriptural. Before a song can be sung on the bus, it must be approved by the captain. Vary the order of the songs and include new songs into the program. Try to use songs which relate to the monthly theme on the bus.

## GAMES

Games can be used to reinforce what has been taught. Use questions from the stories, verse, or preaching times. Games should never be wild. Order should always be maintained. Children should always remain seated while playing.

## STORY

The story time on the way home is subject to the type of treat that is being served. If the serving takes a long time, there may not be ample time for the story. The assigned story should be adjusted ahead of time with that in mind.

Communicate with the captain for the details regarding the time needed to tell the story.

## DRINK

When a worker is assigned to bring the drink, he should communicate with the captain as to how much to bring. The drink should be kept cool in the refrigerator until after church. The bus captain may also assign to the worker to bring enough cups in which to serve the drink.

## TREAT

The treat will almost always be served on the ride home. When the worker is assigned the treat, he should ask the captain how much to prepare. He should also bring the necessary paper products (plates, cups, napkins, etc.), and serving utensils. These items need to be planned out ahead of time.

The items in the snack shop and home economics room need to be reserved through Mrs. Armacost at least one week in advance. It is each route's responsibility to reserve the needed cooking appliances, cookie sheets, etc. Never use anything that has not been pre-arranged through Mrs. Armacost. All commodities used from the kitchen must be prearranged and paid for through Mr. Todd Wright. The snack shop must be thoroughly cleaned after use. If a route violates these rules, it loses the use of the snack shop and/or home ec room.

Workers are also responsible to remove all food related items from the bus (cooler, trays, etc.). Failure to do so will invite racoons.

## VISITATION

The success of a route depends greatly on the amount of time the workers spend in visitation. Regular Saturday bus workers are expected to visit no less than five hours each Saturday. Discretion should be used when females visit in Gary. Mr. Todd Wright can help give direction in this area.

There are two types of visitation. The first one is canvassing. All visiting must be in partners of two. The canvassers need to have the proper information from the church (tracts, etc.), and they need to keep a record of the addresses they visit. While canvassing, the workers need to remember to invite people to the appropriate aspect of the church ministries (Jolly 60s, Help4You, etc.). The gospel should be presented at every opportunity, and the workers are to follow up on all prospects.

The other type of visitation is the friendly visit. It is important to be concerned about the testimony of the church and workers. The visits should not be too long and should accomplish the following objectives.

Get to know the parents. The goal is to reach them with the gospel; however, a worker should never "preach" at them about their sinful habits. Salvation is first before reformation.

The other reason to get to know them is to establish trust in the workers. Talk to them about their children and be friendly with them. The more they trust the workers, the more good can be accomplished with their children.

Saturdays are not the time to play with the children. Saturdays are for the parents; Sundays are for the children. If a child answers the door, ask to talk to his parent. If they cannot come to the door, make the visit short.

#### **Chapter Four: The Safety Guidelines**

##### **GOING TO THE DOORS**

One of the best ways to maintain safety on the bus ride is to walk the children from their door to the bus and to take them home in the same fashion.

When the children are being picked up, it is important to cross the street only in front of the bus (not behind the bus). Also, the parents need to know as accurately as possible what time their child will return.

Indecent dress is not permitted (e.g., miniskirts, tight clothing, revealing necklines, etc.). If riders come out of the home dressed indecent, they should be asked to go back in and change into appropriate clothes. Anyone who does not change is to be left at home. Above 4th grade, children's clothing should be baggy and past the knee. No shorts of any kind are allowed in the auditorium.

When dropping the children off, observe the following guidelines:

When exiting the bus, the worker needs to be the first one off the bus, not the children.

Collect all of the children from that home at the door of the bus, so that everyone can cross the street at the same time.

Cross the street in front of the bus and not behind. Be sure to wait for the driver to signal before crossing the street.

Make certain that someone is home before leaving the children there.

Finally, leave a good impression with the children regarding their Sunday bus ride.

##### **SEATING ON THE BUS**

Children should remain seated while the bus is moving. The workers should help seat the children as quickly as possible so the bus can move.

An orderly method of seating the children on the bus is to have the children sit in the first few seats available when they first get on the bus. Before the bus gets to the next stop, their hands should be marked with the bus number. At the next stop, while the next children are coming to the bus, the first children should be moved to the back of the bus. In this way, the bus should slowly fill up from back to front with their hands already marked.

##### **SHUTTLE CARS**

Shuttle vehicles help save time on the route and provide extra space for people to ride to church. At the same time, the biggest concern when using a shuttle vehicle is safety. The following guidelines need to be strictly observed:

Any vehicle used for shuttle must have the proper insurance form on file in the church office. These forms are available from and must be returned to Mr. Eric Ramos.

All drivers need to be prepared for the route before Sunday morning. The vehicles must be properly fueled and the driver needs a marker, a car seat, and some treats.

All shuttle drivers must obey the traffic laws. This includes stop signs and speed limits.

All the children in the car must wear a seat belt. A car should not carry more than its seat belt capacity, and car seat laws must be obeyed.

When approaching the bus to drop off kids, the driver should park in front of the bus, turn off the engine, empty the car on the curbside only, and walk the children safely to the bus.

After the children are on the bus, the driver should let the captain know the names of the children whom he dropped off.

All shuttle vehicles must be on time for church. "A" route shuttle cars must arrive before 9:45 a.m., and "B" routes by 10:30 a.m.

When the driver arrives at church, he should turn in his count and report to the bus with the children who rode with him. He should help unload the bus.

In the case of an emergency contact your captain and the church office immediately.

## SNOWY AND COLD DAYS

When visiting on Saturday, it is effective to speak to each parent about the cold. Ignoring the weather never helps. The issue of safety needs to be addressed on the Saturday visit. The church's safety policy should be stressed.

The shuttle drivers should be ready early and drive slowly when they have children in their vehicles.

The buses will be cancelled if the cold and ice are too severe. In the event of a cancellation, all the men on the route should meet at the church early that morning. If possible, the treat should also be ready at that time. Each driver will stop at a number of the homes in order to give them the treat and inform them that the buses have been cancelled for the day. If they are not home, a note should be left.

Faithful children can ride in cars to church if the parents permit it and cars have not been banned from the roads.

## **Chapter Five: Special Events**

### FALL PUSH

The weeks of our fall push are always the four Sundays following Labor Day. The object of this promotion is to reach many new contacts which can be worked with the rest of the year.

### CHRISTMAS PUSH

During the cold holiday time many riders become unfaithful to church. The Christmas Push is designed to attract their attention back to church. They will earn small gifts each week they come, and they must come on "Christmas Sunday" to receive their stocking.

### BANQUETS

The Christmas Banquet, Men's Barbeque, and the Mother-Daughter Banquet are great ways to get the parents to come to church. The cost is \$4 per person. Captains will need to sign up parents and children who plan to come ahead of time. The workers are encouraged to invite as many parents as will come. A ride may also have to be arranged for them to come.

The Stewardship Banquet is only for parents who have been coming faithfully and are taking steps toward church membership.

## THE SPRING PUSH

The Spring Push runs for about 6-7 weeks in the spring months and is designed to encourage faithfulness and bringing visitors. This push will follow a theme that will be announced in February. The Sunday School and Junior Church workers are greatly involved in this push.

## CAMP FAIRHAVEN

Camp Fairhaven is a summer day camp that runs for seven weeks during the summer. It is a great opportunity for good bus kids to get away from their neighborhood and into a Christian environment.

The cost for a worker to send a bus kid is \$25 per week. If a worker would like to do this, he should see his captain.

Two special weeks are planned to accommodate any children who would like to come. These two weeks are free, but separated by geographical areas; an "east" week and "west" week. When a captain or worker sends a kid on one of these weeks, he is expected to do the following:

Meet with Brian Rinehart immediately after the Saturday bus meeting just prior to his sponsorship week.

Check up on the progress of his camper during the week.

Communicate adequately with the parents concerning field trips, and transportation.

## RESERVATIONS

Any time a captain desires the use of the campus buildings, rooms, snack shop equipment, etc., he needs to reserve the area at least one week ahead of the time of the event with Mrs. Armacost. The reservations are on a first-come, first-serve basis. The captain is also responsible for the cleanliness of the area after the activity or any repairs needed as a result of the activity.

Any snack shop or home ec room supplies need to be checked out through Mrs. Armacost ahead of time. Taking the supplies without asking carries the penalty of losing the privilege of using the snack shop and/or home ec room. On the first offense, the route is not allowed to use the area for one month. Any additional infractions are a six-month suspension.

## HORSE RIDING

The horses are available for the bus routes to use for horse riding activities as long as they are prearranged with each horse owner in writing two weeks prior to use. Emailing them is fine. Because the safety of the riders is the primary concern, there is a list of rules and procedures to follow. All riding activities are under the supervision of one of the staff horse owners. The guidelines are reviewed each spring in the Saturday bus meeting.

## Chapter Six: The Driver Guidelines

### INSPECTING THE CHURCH VEHICLE

Only the bus driver can do the pre-trip inspection. Fill out a "Trip Report" each time you drive a church vehicle. Follow the instructions on the "Trip Report" form each time a vehicle is used. (The vans must be in neutral to check the transmission fluid.) Do not keep any chemicals in the church vehicle (ether, oil, etc.).

No cars are permitted in the bus parking lot before church on Sunday mornings.

Any time the temperature is less than 40° F, the bus needs to warm up for 20 minutes before it can leave the bus parking lot; above 40° F, 5 minutes is required.

If van seats are removed, the driver must replace them before turning in the keys.

### OPERATING A CHURCH VEHICLE

1. The captain is in charge of the bus, and the driver is expected to follow his directions at all times.
2. Drivers are never to leave the driver's seat while the bus is running (with the exception of the time the bus is warming up in the morning with no one else on the bus).
3. A driver is never to operate the vehicle while talking on a cell phone.
4. An outside guide is required any time the bus is backing up.
5. Keep the windows clear of any object (paper, snow, etc.), which would obstruct the driver's vision. Nothing at all is permitted on the windshield.
6. The back door of the bus should be unobstructed at all times.
7. The windows on the back doors of the vans must remain closed at all times.
8. After unloading the riders, the driver must check the bus for any children left behind.

### PARKING THE CHURCH VEHICLE

1. Vehicles are to be refueled after **each** use.
2. Do not park in front of the dumpsters.
3. Do not leave personal belongings in the vehicle.
4. Return the keys to the lock boxes provided (the van keys to the front desk).
5. The driver is responsible for the cleanliness of the vans.
6. The bus captain is responsible for the cleanliness of the buses.

7. All air brake tanks need to be drained after parking the bus.
8. Notify the front desk as soon as you return.

#### BREAKDOWNS

1. Do not continue to operate a vehicle that has problems. Do not “limp” a vehicle in to the church.
2. Make sure the vehicle is off the road when it is parked.
3. Do not leave the hazard lights on when you leave the vehicle.
4. Leave the keys in the vehicle.
5. Put out warning triangles for the buses.
6. Contact Joe Bishop (929-8969) and the front desk as soon as possible.

#### IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT

1. Fill out an accident report form from the office.
2. Notify Mr. Bishop that day.
3. If riders are involved, always file a police report.
4. Follow the instructions of EMT or police if they should become involved.