

The logo for Gateway Special Needs Ministry features the word "gateway" in a white, cursive script font at the top. Below it, the words "Special Needs Ministry" are written in a white, outlined, blocky font. The text is set against a teal, rounded rectangular background.

gateway Special Needs Ministry

Mission Statement:

We are dedicated to providing environments that help develop the spiritual, physical, and emotional lives of children with special needs, while providing support for their families.

Our Sunday morning service is called **Special Blessings**, and provides care for children age 4 – 2nd grade at the 9:30 service and for 3rd - 5th graders at the 11:00am service. Each of our participants is matched with a **Buddy**: someone who will be his/her friend and help them throughout the hour with song, music, Bible stories and other activities. Our Buddies and volunteers are youth and adults who have a huge heart and love for working with our children with special needs. Each volunteer goes through an application process that involves a background check, interview, and classroom training.

Special Blessings provides:

- A sensory-friendly classroom experience
- Specialized program with hands-on experiences
- Extra volunteer attention to meet each child's needs
- A safe environment where children will flourish in a small group setting

Application & Participation Process:

1. Parents apply for their child to be in the Special Blessings class at gateway-community.org/specialneeds.
2. Special Needs Ministry Coordinator, Belinda Thompson, will contact parents for more information and to set up a site visit.
3. Once all paperwork is complete, your child will be assigned a Buddy. (On occasion, there may be a short waiting period until a Buddy is available).
4. Once numbers 1, 2 and 3 have been approved; WEEKLY communication to Belinda Thompson bthompson@gateway-community.org is required to ensure a scheduled Buddy. (Please email by Tuesday.)

Eligibility:

In order to provide the best environment where each individual can grow in their faith, every prospective participant must meet the following criteria in order to be part of our children with special needs community:

- Be able to function with a one-on-one Buddy/volunteer
- Does not require isolation from the rest of population
- Does not require taking medication during class
- Must not be aggressive or pose a threat to themselves or others; or have such severe medical/emotional needs which require specialized care. (*)

(*) *The Special Needs Ministry defines aggressive behavior as behavior that is forceful, hostile verbally/physically.*

Special Needs Ministry reserves the right to make case-by-case decisions based on a participant's medical, emotional, and behavioral need for care.

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Parents Night Out

We offer a parents night out on the third Friday of most months for children ages 4 through 5th grade and their siblings. Registration is required each month to attend. Registration for Parents Night Out will be posted at gateway-community.org/find-it.

Inclusion

If you would like your child to be in one of our other classrooms for children or students age 4 - 5th grade, please schedule a time to visit with Special Needs Ministry Coordinator, Belinda Thompson to discuss a plan that will best suit your child.

Communication

Communication between Parent, Coordinator and Buddy will be the key to create a successful environment for your child. We are a church family who will welcome you with open arms and offer you the support you need. We are neither a medical facility nor a school, but we are a place where you will feel loved and cared for. We want the very best experience for your child; we want her/him to feel welcomed and loved in our Special Blessings class. We want to welcome you and your family to our church and will do everything possible to make you feel welcomed.

For more information, contact Belinda Thompson at bthompson@gateway-community.org