

FUMC Preschool Parent Handbook



First United Methodist Church Preschool

www.FUMCSPpreschool.org

A ministry of First United Methodist Church of Saint Petersburg
Located at the corner of 2nd Street & 3rd Avenue North Downtown St. Pete

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PCLB License #C870138

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Dear Preschool Parent,

Welcome to the Preschool! We feel that children are our first priority as a church and as a community, and the fact that you have entrusted your first priority to us is a privilege. We look forward to forming a warm and nurturing environment for your child, and to forming a lasting relationship with your whole family.

We strive to offer your children the best in care and education here. We are proud of our teachers; they are loving professionals who are going to walk with you this year in the wonderful development of your child.

A lot of that happens in preschool. From great curriculum, to wonderful extra activities, our child is going to grow in many ways. We will invest in them in the classroom, but also in activities such as chapel, music opportunities (our Christmas program is something you don't want to miss!), physical activity enrichment programs, etc.

I want to take this opportunity to invite you to the larger life of the church as well. On Wednesday nights we have a children's program that is really amazing. Your child can continue to develop friendships from the classroom, enjoy food, fun and learning about the Bible all at the same time. And of course, Sunday mornings we have a great Sunday school and Children's Church program that is the best that St. Petersburg has to offer. The folks that lead our chapel time lead those other activities, so your children will fit right into our other opportunities.

And of course you are invited to Sunday morning classes for adults, and several worship opportunities that seek to be vibrant and relevant.

However we can be of assistance to you, please let us know. Enclosed in this document is the way we are seeking to be the most organized and caring for all of the children and staff here. Please read knowing all of this is aimed at creating the most excellent program for your child possible. Miss Yvonne is here to answer questions, meet needs, and to ensure that we are all focused on the same goal. Please visit with her! And if I can be of any assistance, please let me know.

Blessings, and welcome! Pastor Craig
cnelson@flumc.org **About FUMC**
Preschool Mission

FUMC Preschool's mission is to share the love, joy and peace of Christ with our students and families while providing a safe and nurturing environment where our students will be introduced to education in a fun and stimulating environment.

Curriculum

We use curriculum that meets all standards of the state of Florida for early education.

Our lesson plans are well-balanced and focus on spiritual, intellectual, and social skills. The activities are offered are varied and include quiet and active activities. Children are scheduled for playground and free center time each day. Chapel is also a regular part of our curriculum.

FUMC Preschool is a Christian faith-based program that integrates faith and bible stories throughout the day.

Who We Serve

We are currently serving ages 2-5. Your child must be 2 years old to enter the program. VPK requires that your child is 4 years old on September 1st of the school year.

Licensing and Accreditation

FUMC Preschool is licensed by the Pinellas County Licensing board (PCLB). We are currently approved to serve 113 children. We have a minimum of 2 inspections per year. We are also governed by the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County and the state.

Our Preschool Council

The Preschool Council is the advisory committee of the preschool program. The director and chair of the committee are responsible for reporting to the council. The committee meets once per month to consider recommendations from the director, staff and church pastor and is comprised of church members. The council's mission is to ensure that the preschool's mission is being fulfilled.

All meetings are administered through an agenda by the appointed Chair of the committee. The first part of the meeting is open to the public. The executive portion is closed to the council.

Please contact the director, chair or council member with any concerns or needs of a governing or policy nature. Council members are available upon request.

FUMC Preschool does not discriminate based on sex, religion or race.

Hours of Operation

We are open from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. We offer full day classes and half day classes. You may choose to enroll your child 5 days a week or Tuesday/Thursday or Monday/Wednesday/Friday. Please refer to current contract.

Drop-off and Pick-up

Drop-off is as early as 8:00 am. Please make sure you connect with a teacher that will check your child in safely. If the entrance door is locked to the preschool, please come to the director's office. If no one is available, you may buzz the buzzer and a teacher will let you in.

Pick-up time is no later than 1:00 pm (if half day) or 6:00 pm (full day). If your child is picked up late there will be a fee. If after 1:00 pm for half day, the charge will be the hourly rate for that age. If after 6:00 pm the charge will be a minimum of \$5.00 plus \$1.00 for each additional minute.

Holidays/Closures

The school will be closed the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving break, day after Christmas, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Day after Easter, Memorial Day, and 4th of July.

We follow the Pinellas County School calendar for Spring Break and Christmas Break. We will offer a special program for the summer each year and during some or all of the other breaks.

Emergency closures

In the event the preschool must close due to hurricanes, inclement weather or other unforeseen causes, we will still collect tuition as FUMC Preschool will continue to pay the teachers.

Preschool Facility

Our preschool currently has 6 classrooms; 2 VPK classrooms, 2 three-year-old classrooms and 2 two-year old classrooms. All classrooms are secure and located in a section of the building that is locked and not accessible by the general public during school hours.

Trained security personnel are here near the entrance during preschool hours.

Preschool Staff

We have a well-trained and most importantly, loving staff. Lead teachers have acquired or are in the process of getting their Staff Credential from the state of Florida. We have a low student to teacher ratio that enables us to offer the best care possible.

All staff is thoroughly screened with a Level II background screening. Any personnel working in the area must be screened as well.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

VPK is a school readiness program offered by FUMC in partnership with the State of Florida. The program is free for the hours from 9-12. 540 instructional hours are offered during the school year.

FUMC Preschool offers a comprehensive and free VPK program for children who turn 4 by September 1st of the school year that he/she is attending. It is designed to prepare children for Kindergarten.

Attendance in the VPK program is monitored and children must complete at least 80% of the program to qualify.

In order to enroll in this program you must obtain a VPK certificate at www.elcpinellas.net and bring the voucher to the office to secure your registration.

You may choose to extend your day with VPK – see current contract form for cost and details.

In the event that a parent has a desire to have their child repeat the year in VPK for a second time it must be agreed upon by the teacher, parent and director and seen as a benefit for the child. The tuition will be at the parent's expense.

Please direct any questions to the office.

Tuition/Fees

Tuition is based on an annual rate and spread out over 10 months of payments. Tuition is due the 1st of each month prior to service. You may pay by cash, checks, auto debit or credit card. Checks can be made payable to: First United Methodist Church Preschool. Payments may be dropped off at the office. Payments received after the 15th will have a late fee of \$40.00. Returned (NSF) checks will receive a \$25.00 fee. Holidays and training days have all been considered when calculating tuition, therefore

monthly tuition remains the same each month regardless of number of school days. This includes any days closed due to inclement weather.

There is an annual registration fee due each year to secure a seat in our school.

VPK students who are registered for the 9 am – 12 pm schedule do not require a registration fee.

Please refer to the current contract form for all tuition and fees.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

Discipline is a method of guiding behavior before it becomes inappropriate. A well rounded, age appropriate environment and the positive emotional responses of caregivers helps to minimize discipline problems in children. At FUMC Preschool we have school wide rules and expectations that will be taught: **Rules and the Scriptures**

- 1) Be Kind to Others** (Golden Rule) - Obey your teachers, show self-control, wait to talk, be respectful to everyone. “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” Matthew 7:12

- 2) Take Care of Our School**—Clean up after yourself, take care of the things in the church and school. “Guard what has been entrusted to your care.” 1 Timothy 6:20

- 3) Be Safe**—Walk inside, listen to directions, stay with your class, be aware of your space. “Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.” Psalm 16:1

FUMC Preschool has many guidance policies. We use many strategies to guide behavior. Positive Behavior Support, Conscious Discipline, and Looking Beyond Behaviors are a few strategies that work well in our environment. We desire that children gain an intrinsic value in choosing correctly. In the event negative behavior escalates, we do have procedures in place.

Corrective Action Policy Agreement

FUMC Preschool takes the responsibility of guiding young children toward positive and appropriate behavior very seriously. Most of the children respond well to our guidance plan and require little or no follow-up from home. Occasionally, when a child's disobedience and/or aggressive behavior continues, it will become necessary to involve the parent and the following corrective action outline will be followed to help resolve behavioral problems:

- A phone call to parents (this first call will be made after all other steps in the discipline policy have been taken).
- ○ If a child defiantly strikes, bites, or spits at a teacher, the director may decide to send the child home for the day (or the following day if the incident occurred late in the day).
 - Although it is not uncommon for a very young child to occasionally bite, parents will be required to meet with the director after a third bite within a two week period to discuss a corrective plan of action.
- A second phone call to parents must be followed up with a director/teacher /parent meeting to discuss a corrective plan. This may occur with a face-to-face meeting or over the phone within 48 hours unless otherwise approved by the director.
- A third phone call to parents will require the child to go home for the day and a plan of action to be followed by the parent and teacher and will also include mandatory parent/director conferences every three weeks to discuss/monitor the progress of the behavioral problem.
 - One possible plan might include an agreement for a specialist from Project Challenge, or other programs, to conduct an observation of the problem behavior. Observations are completed to rule out physical or other problems.
 - Once the observation is complete, the specialist will meet with teacher and parents to discuss a tailored plan of action to help correct the behavior. If behavior is not the main issue, other agencies may be contacted for guidance.

If there is no improvement in the child's behavior after repeated attempts of the corrective action plan(s) or the parent refuses to cooperate or participate with FUMC Preschool, it may become necessary to dis-enroll the child from school. Disenrollment

is never the desire of FUMC Preschool and is only done so when all other options have been exhausted.

Conferences/Assessments

A parent, teacher or the director may request an assessment or conference at any time. VPK students will have open conference times twice a year at the discretion of the teacher and parent.

Assessments are done three times per year in VPK. These assessments measure school readiness skills. All other students will have assessments periodically to ensure they are progressing for their age. If at any time there is a question regarding development, FUMC Preschool has resources available to help.

Special Needs Children

It is FUMC's desire to help all children, but we realize that we may not be appropriate for all children. We are able to accommodate some special needs, i.e. food allergies, some physical limitations, some medical limitations, etc. If there is a concern, please discuss with the director. A determination will be made whether or not the school will fit the need. It may require a trial period with follow-up.

If your child or you requires special assistance for drop-off and pick-up, please notify the office to discuss arrangements.

Emergency Plans

FUMC Preschool conducts fire, tornado and lockdown drills in accordance with PCLB on a regular basis. In the event we have to evacuate the property away from the church location, we will take children to Northshore Pool at 901 North Shore Drive NE, St Pete, FL 33701.

Open Door Policy

We are very blessed to have your children here and want you to feel welcome. Please know that we have an open door policy and you are welcome to visit us anytime you choose. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to volunteer or contribute to the class and school.

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