

# First United Methodist Church Preschool

## Parent Handbook



“Let the children come unto me...”

Matthew 19:14



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*Once you make the decision to seek care for your child outside the home, you must find a childcare facility you can trust. At a glance, the First United Methodist Church Preschool may look like any other center you visit. The First United Methodist Church Preschool is, however, a refreshingly different place.*

*At the preschool, we provide an environment of safety and nurture, and, most importantly, an atmosphere where each child can experience the love of God. Christ-centered activities, Bible stories, prayer and devotions are part of each day's schedule.*

*This handbook will acquaint you with our policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and ask questions. We're glad to help in any way, and we encourage you to give us feedback on any aspect of our service.*

In accepting enrollment at the First United Methodist Church Preschool, parents and guardians must also accept the responsibilities for policies stated in the Parent Handbook. Failure to responsibly handle health, financial or discipline problems may result in discontinuance of enrollment at the preschool. The First United Methodist Church Preschool has the responsibility for the safety and care of all children in attendance and cannot compromise that responsibility to accommodate those who do not meet their obligations.

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### HISTORY

The First United Methodist Church Preschool was organized in 1974. The congregation has been active and supportive of the preschool since its inception. The community of Coral Springs had demonstrated a need for a preschool to help each child grow in his relationship with God in a developmentally appropriate environment. Our school has grown through the years and has expanded to serve students in the age groups of 2 years through Pre-K4. We have been a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) provider since the program began in 2005. We have been dedicated to keeping the high standards that were established at the beginning of the school program. We strive to adhere to the practice that our school, just like our church, exemplifies the Christ-like qualities of love, understanding, self-discipline, and all others that are a reflection of God.

### PHILOSOPHY

The First United Methodist Church Preschool believes in providing our students with a nurturing Christian environment. We recognize that every child is a unique gift from God. We believe that a child-centered, activity-based program will enable all children to reach their potential, celebrate their success, and feel the joy of learning.

### GOALS

To achieve this purpose, the First United Methodist Church Preschool will pursue the following goals relating to individual childcare:

- To provide Christ-centered care to meet the individual needs of the child.
- To encourage each child's individual growth and development in spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and cognitive areas.
- To develop in each child a positive self-concept so that he/she sees him/herself as a worthy individual.
- To help each child develop satisfying social relationships with both children and adults.
- To encourage parent participation in all phases of childcare.
- To follow academic and appropriate objectives administered by our preschool.

### ORGANIZATION

The First United Methodist Church Preschool is an independent non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors. The Board hires a director who answers to the Board and who is responsible for the daily operation of the preschool.

### LICENSING

The First United Methodist Church Preschool is a fully approved facility licensed by the Broward County Childcare Licensing and Enforcement Division and is subject to regular inspections.

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## ACCREDITATION

The First United Methodist Church Preschool is an accredited preschool through APPLE (Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment) and is a State of Florida Gold Seal recipient. The preschool has also participated in the Broward County Quality Rating Improvement System.

## STAFF/CHILD RATIO

The Broward County Childcare Licensing and Enforcement Division sets the minimum standard for staff/child ratios. We meet and exceed their standards as well as those set forth by APPLE, our accreditation agency. Ratio standards for the various ages are:

<u>Age of Children</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
18 months	1 staff member for 6 children
2 years	1 staff member for 8 children
3 years	1 staff member for 10 children
Pre-K 4 years	1 staff member for 10 children



## DAILY OPERATION

The preschool is open Monday through Friday. The preschool office is open daily during the school year from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

## CLOSINGS

Our school schedule closely follows the Broward County public school and VPK calendar. An annual calendar is mailed to all registered families in July. Your child's teacher will hand out a monthly calendar at the beginning of each new month.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is very important to us. If you have any concerns regarding your child's school experience, please contact your child's teacher. You can do this by leaving a message in the office. In addition, the director is always available to parents during school hours and can be contacted through the school office.

The staff is committed to helping each child reach his/her potential, celebrate his/her success, and feel the joy of learning. Teachers will conference with parents twice each school year to discuss their child's learning goals, progress and to discuss any concerns.

The preschool regularly updates families on important events and dates through memos and flyers sent home, on the website [www.firstchurchpreschool.net](http://www.firstchurchpreschool.net) and on the preschool Facebook page.

*\*Please make sure the preschool office receives any updated phone numbers or addresses.*

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## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### **ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL**

#### **ENROLLMENT**

We are a ministry of the First United Methodist Church. The student body includes children of this church, other church congregations, and children who have no church affiliation. Children of any race, color, or creed are welcome, and are entitled to all rights, privileges, and programs made available to students in the preschool. There is, however, an understanding that Christian concepts will be integrated into the program.

Our preschool welcomes children with special needs and makes accommodations according to guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Acts for both children and adults with special needs.

#### **IMMUNIZATION**

The Department of Health requires that all children enrolled in preschools have a State of Florida immunization certificate (form DH 680) and a School Entry Health Exam certificate (form DH 3040) with valid expiration dates on file. Each child enrolled must have these forms prior to his/her first day of attendance. *Your child will not be permitted to attend class until these forms are submitted to the preschool office.*

### **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Registration fees are due at the time of registration and are non-refundable. Church members will receive a \$25 discount on Registration Fees. **The tuition is an annual tuition divided equally over a 10-month period.** The first payment shall be due on or about August 1<sup>st</sup> and the last full payment on or about May 1<sup>st</sup>. There is a 10% sibling discount available. A late fee of \$10 is charged if tuition is not paid by the due date. A grace period is allowed until the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. A \$20 processing fee is charged for checks returned by the bank. After two returned checks, payments must be made in cash. All daily Cracker Jack and Early Morning Payments are due on the date attended.

*If any class does not reach minimum capacity, it will be subject to cancellation and the registration fee will be refunded.*





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## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Children benefit most from a group experience when they are healthy and safe from unnecessary hazards.

### DISEASE AND ILLNESS

In order to protect your child and other children at the preschool, we must ask parents not to bring sick children. Signs that indicate disease or illness include:

- An oral temperature of over 99°F or rectal temperature of over 100°F.
- Intestinal illness accompanied by diarrhea or vomiting.
- Sore or discharging eyes or ears, or profuse nasal discharge.



### ATTENDANCE POLICY – GENERAL SYMPTOMS

Children will not be permitted to attend with any of the following symptoms: rash, fever, earache, sore throat, diarrhea, chronic cough, vomiting, discharge from the eyes or profuse nasal discharge. *In order to return to the preschool, a child must be free of fever for 24 hours.* If questionable symptoms are still present, verification from a doctor stating the child is free to return is requested. Children who are on medication must receive a full 24-hour course of treatment before returning to the preschool.

#### Communicable Diseases/Illnesses

- *Thrush, conjunctivitis (pink-eye), strep, impetigo* – Children must be on medication for 24 hours. In the case of strep, they must be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to the preschool.
- *Infestations (lice, etc.)* – Children must have verification from a doctor stating that they may return to preschool.

### MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION

An Authorization for Medication (Form #5) must be filled out before medicine can be administered. In some cases, a written note from the doctor may be required. All medication provided by parents must be in the original, unopened container. For prescription medication, the name of the child's physician, child's name, name of the medication, expiration date and directions for administration must be printed on the label. All medications will be stored in a locked cabinet and administered by authorized preschool personnel.

### DETECTION OF ILLNESS WHILE IN PRESCHOOL

If it is detected that your child has an illness while at the preschool, we will call you so that you can make necessary arrangements for your child to be picked up within one hour. If there is a discrepancy of opinion as to the sickness of the child, please realize that in consideration of the health of the other children, the decisions of the preschool staff are final.

Please be aware that all preschool employees are required to report any suspected instance of child abuse to the proper authorities according to the guidelines set forth in the *Child Abuse & Neglect in Florida* Form CF-FSP 5337

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## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

### EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FORM

Preventing and responding appropriately to accidents, injuries and incidents are the main responsibility of a caregiver in providing a safe environment. The preschool follows a strict set of guidelines during an emergency as set forth in the *Emergency Procedures Form* signed at registration.



### EVACUATION

Evacuation procedures are posted in each room.

### WEATHER

If the Broward County Schools close in the event of a hurricane, tropical warning or other weather event, the same school closing policy will apply to our preschool. Tune in to your local radio or TV station.

### TORNADO WARNING

In the event of a tornado warning in the area, students will be escorted to a safe location; *parents cannot pick up their children until an all-clear notice is issued.*

### FIRE

Fire drills are held monthly. In case of a fire, children will be escorted to the place designated for each class.

### LOCKDOWN

If any event in the local vicinity of the preschool could potentially be a threat to the safety and well-being of our students and staff, the school will go into emergency lockdown. A lockdown means no one is allowed in and no one is allowed to leave. *Parents are not permitted to pick up their children during a lockdown.* The preschool will remain in lockdown until advised by the police department or other emergency services that conditions have returned to normal.

### ACCIDENTS/UNUSUAL INCIDENTS

In case of emergencies, each child must have an Emergency Information form on file at the preschool. All accidents or unusual incidents (even minor ones) are documented, and parents will receive a copy of any accident/injury form involving their child.





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## CAMPUS POLICIES

### CELL PHONE POLICY

Parents are asked to refrain from using cell phones during arrival and dismissal times. These transitions are very important to your child and require your full attention. Teachers will not receive a child from or dismiss a child to a parent or escort while that person is using a cell phone.

### NO SMOKING ENVIRONMENT

The preschool is a smoke-free campus. No smoking is permitted on school grounds or in the parking lots. This policy applies to all staff, families and visitors.

### PARKING LOT SAFETY

Please lock your car and take all valuables with you when dropping off and picking up at preschool. Unfortunately, school parking lots are sometimes targets for burglaries. ***Do NOT leave unattended children in your car. Preschool personnel are required to call the authorities if an unattended child is observed in a vehicle.***

### PETS

Due to allergies and safety issues, no pets are allowed on campus or in classrooms with the sole exception of service animals.

### VISITATIONS

The First United Methodist Church Preschool has an open door policy. If you need to visit, you must sign in with the office upon arrival. Please be aware that children often act differently when parents visit the center. Your child will be excited that you are visiting and may not behave in his/her usual fashion. This is normal.

## DAILY ROUTINE



### ARRIVAL

Upon arrival, parents are to take their child to his/her classroom, sign in, and make sure a teacher receives the child from them. All belongings (extra clothes, etc.) should be labeled and taken to the child's room. Each child will have a cubby or box assigned to him/her for belongings. It is the policy of the preschool that all children wash their hands upon arrival in the classroom. Children participating in Early Morning Care must be signed-in by the authorized adult when dropped off in the Early Morning classroom.

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## DISMISSAL

Children will be dismissed by the teacher one at a time directly to the parent or authorized escort. When a child is dismissed from the Cracker Jack or Enrichment classroom, the person picking up the child must sign the sign-out sheet. When a child is dismissed from the playground during aftercare hours, the person picking up the child must sign the sign-out sheet in the presence of a staff member before the child is allowed to exit the gated playground area. *Staff will not dismiss a child to any individual suspected to be intoxicated or otherwise impaired. The individual will be escorted to the preschool office and another authorized person will be contacted to pick up the student.*

**For safety reasons and licensing requirements, children are not permitted to play on our campus before or after school since they are unsupervised by preschool staff.**

## RELEASE FORMS FOR ESCORTS

State regulations require that the preschool have signed release forms from parents before permitting a child to leave with anyone other than parents. This is for your child's protection. Parents may list as many persons as desired on the child's information sheet, stating who has permission to pick up the child. Please remember, if the parent phones to inform that someone else will pick up his or her child, that person's name must be on the release form. If there is ever the need for a person whose name is not on the release form to pick up your child, give a written note to the office in the morning when checking in your child. The escort person must bring identification.



## LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Please be prompt in picking up your child. Our staff members have other commitments that they must keep. Children picked up more than 5 minutes after class dismissal will be signed-in to Cracker Jack Club and parents will be charged a minimum one-hour fee. Children picked up after their scheduled pick up time in Cracker Jack Club will be charged at minimum an additional one-hour Cracker Jack Fee.

Children picked up late at the end of the school day will be charged a minimum of \$5 after the first five minutes and \$1 per minute thereafter.

## PERSONAL PROPERTY

Each child will have an assigned place to keep clothing, papers, and projects that are to be taken home. We strongly discourage children from bringing toys from home, because we cannot be responsible for items getting lost or broken.

### To be sent with each child:

- One change of clothing, including socks and underwear. *Everything* must have your child's name on it.
- Parents of 2-year-olds who are not potty trained should bring disposable diapers, baby wipes and a complete change of clothing.



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## **CLOTHING**

Please dress your child in comfortable clothes for preschool. Children wear smocks to protect clothing, but preschool is “messy business” – painting, water and sand play, etc. If it would upset you to see paint on it, please don’t let your child wear it! Please avoid clothes with difficult buttons, snaps, belts or drawstrings. Comfortable clothing will make your child’s preschool experience more safe and enjoyable.

## **FOOTWEAR**

Children must wear closed-toe shoes (ex: sneakers) for playground safety. No sandals or crocs are allowed. Children wearing inappropriate footwear will not be allowed to use playground equipment.

## **SNACKS**

Parents will bring light, nutritious snacks (fruit, pretzels, yogurt, etc.) daily for their children. A list of recommended snacks is provided upon registration and is posted in the office.

## **LUNCH**

Children attending preschool beyond 12 noon must bring a packed lunch. Lunches may be brought in lunch boxes or bags and must not require refrigeration or heating. Lunches must follow the guidelines as set forth in the *Alternate Nutrition Plan Agreement* signed at registration. Healthy lunches and good eating habits are encouraged.

## **PARENT PERMISSION FOR FOOD ACTIVITIES**

Our teachers frequently will have food activities in the classroom and parents may occasionally bring in treats from home to celebrate special occasions in the classroom. Parents or Guardians are required to sign a permission form allowing their child to participate in these classroom food activities.

## **BIRTHDAYS**



Birthdays are a special event for your child. We love to help celebrate! If you would like to provide a special treat, please check with your child’s teacher to make arrangements. Due to licensing requirements, food items brought into the classroom must be store bought.



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## **OUTSIDE PLAY**

All students will have daily outside time except during inclement weather. Please dress your child accordingly. A doctor's excuse is required to exclude your child from outside play for a temporary period of time. *For safety reasons, children wearing inappropriate footwear will not be allowed to use climbing equipment.*



### **Inclement Weather Plan:**

Indoor play time including music and movement and large motor activities will be provided in the Orange Room and/or Robey Hall.

## **TELEVISION AND VIDEO VIEWING**

All television and video viewing is limited to educational shows related to classroom learning topics. Television is never used as a replacement for physical activity during inclement weather. All television, video and computer time is restricted to thirty minutes or less per week for each student.

## **DISCIPLINE**

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Our discipline is fair, consistent and appropriate to each child's age and developmental level. Our policy is always one of loving discipline. Humiliation of a child will never be tolerated.

### **ENCOURAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR**

Our goal is to teach young children to think about their behavior and the consequences. The end result is children who are intrinsically controlled, considerate of others and responsible persons within the community.

Discipline offers an opportunity to teach responsible behavior. We practice "preventive discipline" by providing the children with challenging and engaging activities, by treating them with warmth and respect and by establishing clear and realistic rules, goals and expectations.

We believe that positive reinforcement is the key to positive behavior; we compliment positive behavior and redirect negative behavior.

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## DEALING WITH MISBEHAVIOR

Children who misbehave are gently, but firmly reminded of what is expected of them. If misbehavior persists, teachers will follow through with fair and logical consequences that are designed to encourage appropriate behavior.



The First Methodist Church Preschool holds four basic rules in guiding and setting limits for young children:

1. Children may not hurt themselves, other children, or the classroom materials. If this does occur, the behavior is stopped and the appropriate behavior and consequences of the particular situation are explained to them.
2. Children are then redirected, if necessary, to another activity, or it is suggested that they choose another activity area in which to work. It is our desire that initially the children be allowed to work out their own problems and that the teacher intervenes or redirects only when this is not possible.
3. If redirection or an alternate activity is not the solution, a child may be placed in a chair to calm down and reflect on what has just happened. This will be brief (1 minute per year of age; 5 minutes maximum).
4. If a problem continues to exist, the child may be taken to the preschool office. If this happens, the teacher will communicate with the parents regarding the misbehavior. Please remember, we have your child's best interests at heart. We will do everything we can to help your child through any difficult times.
5. In only the most extreme of situations (the child poses a danger to others or to him/herself or lack of parental cooperation), the preschool reserves the right to dis-enroll a student because of behavior.

## PARENT PARTICIPATION

At First United Methodist Preschool, we encourage parents to participate in our school in many ways. We have an active Preschool Parents' Club (PPC) which all families are encouraged to join. Parents are utilized at home cutting out items for projects, organizing class pictures, etc. In the classroom some of the ways parents help us are: setting up and helping during class parties, reading stories, sharing their occupations, helping with cooking, and other projects. Our PPC also organizes fundraisers and other events throughout the school year which provide many opportunities for parent participation.

## VOLUNTEERS

All Preschool Volunteers are required to complete a Volunteer Application packet prior to participating in school activities. The packet includes: Personal Information, Guidelines for Volunteers, Security Background Information, Volunteer Affidavit, First United Methodist Child/Youth Participation Covenant Statement and Volunteer Attendance Sheet.

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## PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES



Our goal is to maintain good communication between parents, children, teachers and administration. Some specific things you must do include:

- Complete and update all enrollment forms and health information.
- Personally escort your child to and from his/her classroom each day. Do not use your cell phone during arrival and dismissal. Smoking is not permitted on campus.
- Notify the preschool, in writing, if someone other than a parent will pick up your child. Ask that person to bring identification.
- Your child will be formally assessed a minimum of two times during the school year. Be available for all conferences requested by your child's teacher or administration.
- Keep the preschool office informed of any important changes in home situations, telephone numbers and emergency numbers.
- Pay your bill on time. Avoid delinquency, which could cause termination of enrollment.
- Bring your questions or concerns to your child's teacher or the director at any time.
- Classroom visitors must sign in and out in the preschool office and record all volunteer hours.

*First United Methodist Preschool reserves the right to dismiss any child at the discretion of the Board of Directors.*



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*With the guidance of our Lord and the help of our  
dedicated staff, we look forward to serving you and  
your child.*

*In His Service,  
First United Methodist Church Preschool*



*Jesus loves the little children.*