



preschool
AT FIRST CHURCH

Parent Handbook



Dear Preschool Families,

I would like to welcome you to First Church Preschool. We are honored that you have chosen First Church Preschool to be part of your child's early education and care during these most precious preschool years.

It is our belief that children in their earliest years have tremendous curiosity and capacity to learn. We will encourage these characteristics and work to help your child learn and grow. I truly believe that your child will be in the best hands, receiving a quality education and most importantly, enjoying their time spent learning.

I look forward to getting to know each and every one of our parents and students as we become a "family" of our own. Please take some time to look through the information provided in this handbook to learn about our program and school philosophies. We look forward to working with you to help give your child the best start possible.

Sincerely,

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

DIRECTOR:

Jessica Bigley
preschool@myfirstchurch.com

DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT:

Anne Dowsett

OFFICE HOURS:

M-F 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM

MAILING INFORMATION:

First Church of God Preschool
2627 Niles Ave.
Saint Joseph, MI 49085

PHONE:

(269) 983-1816

WEBSITE:

Myfirstchurch.com/preschool

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Welcome to the First Church of God Preschool! We are a preschool ministry of First Church serving families across Southwest Michigan since 1967.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

Our **MISSION** is to honor God by:

- Providing Excellence in early childhood education
- Providing Exceptional Care in a Nurturing Learning Environment
- Building Bridges between our community and First Church of God

Our preschool is an institution that welcomes families of all faiths, creeds, ethnic origins and affirms the positive value of diversity.

Our **PURPOSE** is to establish a climate of acceptance, love, trust and discipline, with programs of learning and enrichment where young children will experience growth in:

- ✓ Feelings of confidence and self-worth
- ✓ Relating to his/her peers in a positive way
- ✓ Learning positive ways to handle frustration
- ✓ Achieving expression through art, music and movement (physical skills)
- ✓ Expanding desire to learn, discover and create
- ✓ Achieving pre-reading, language and pre-math skills
- ✓ Developing spiritual awareness of God and His creation

LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

The church recognizes the importance of the early years in the life of the child and believes that the young child's life can be enriched through guided experiences with other children and qualified, caring teachers in an atmosphere of Christian love.

The ministry at First Church of God Preschool is based on the understanding that children pass through a number of predictable, orderly stages in their growing process. We have designed and utilized programs which are developmentally appropriate for children at varying stages of growth.

Experiential learning is a cornerstone of the program as well as providing many choices for children within a carefully arranged overall structure. A variety of selected learning

opportunities based on the children's needs and interests are offered. These are geared to the appropriate developmental level and are intended to encourage development in all seven areas of a child's life: cognitive, creative, expressive language, fine motor, gross motor, social/emotional and spiritual.

Spiritual development of the child occurs principally in the home and through local church ministries. Our preschool encourages spiritual awareness by offering prayer before daily snacks, attending monthly chapels, providing an atmosphere of love, acceptance, trust and positive self-worth, along with acknowledging God and His creation and sharing the account of the birth and resurrection of Christ.

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

We provide a safe and caring environment that is developmentally appropriate and embraces the 4 building blocks of child development:

- social/emotional
- self-care, physical well-being & motor skills
- language development
- early academics.

3 YEAR OLDS (3 years old by September 30)

Most of the children enrolled in our classes are experiencing a classroom setting for the first time. For others, this may be their first experience with a large group of children. Therefore, our purpose in this class is to provide the children with an environment in which they will learn basic social skills such as sharing, cooperation, self-control and patience. We also concentrate on colors, shapes, counting and name recognition. This is accomplished through creative play, art, music, movement, exploration, and literacy. Basic academic concepts are introduced during circle time, large and small group activities, story time, and snack time. Our purpose is to make their first experience in a classroom as exciting and stimulating as possible.

4 YEAR OLDS (4 years old by December 31)

This class will provide a loving and caring atmosphere where "Learning is fun". Classroom activities are planned to help develop self-esteem, self-control, creativity, social skills, and early academics. We work on fine motor skills through drawing, cutting, writing our name and creating art. At this age children learn best by moving large muscles. Large motor skills are developed through games, group activities and music with movement. Early literacy is a critical component for the 4-year-old. Students will be provided opportunities to be read to using big books and picture books, read on their own, and practice beginning spelling and phonics skills. Children also become authors and illustrators as they create several "books" throughout the year.

Through this process they begin to understand that letters and sounds make words which give meaning and tell stories. Other skills include calendar, color and shape identification, numbers 1-10, and beginning letter and sound identification. This is done through counting, sorting, exploration, and hands on center-based activities.

PRE-K (4 years old by September 1)

Our Pre-K program uses a nurturing and caring environment to help prepare the children for Kindergarten. We believe that children learn best through a variety of play opportunities and that their social learning is equally as vital as their academic learning. We work on fine motor skills, gross motor skills, counting, introduction of writing numbers and letters correctly, writing their name with control, taking turns, sharing, following directions, and formal letter/sound instruction using "Zoo-Phonics". We also have a community enrichment program that provides our children with a basic understanding of our community and the important roles that our local community workers and businesses play in helping us. This includes visits from the police and fire departments, nature centers, and many others. We are committed to ensuring that each child is encouraged, supported, and empowered to reach their full social and academic potential, so they can say with confidence, "I am ready for Kindergarten!"

YOUNG FIVES

An extended day preschool play-based program designed for students to develop academically, socially, and emotionally prior to experiencing a traditional kindergarten program. Teachers plan around weekly zoophonics themes. These themes guide their play & learning in the areas of art, science, math, letters and sounds, and reading with social skills, and critical thinking.

Qualifications:

- MUST be 5 years old between June 1 and December 1
 - Priority will be given to students who turn 5 between September 1st and December 1st.
- Must have previous preschool experience
 1. Independent bathroom user
 2. Limited openings, registration does not guarantee enrollment

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND GUIDELINES

CURRICULUM: Each class offered has a carefully designed child-centered curriculum developed by our qualified staff. We are committed to the implementation of effective learning strategies for each and every child, enabling them to be fully prepared for Kindergarten.

DISCIPLINE: The staff shall use positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation. Teachers will utilize theories of Love and Logic employing “empathy and choice”, as well as Whole Brain Strategies using “connect and redirect” when working with behavior issues. We will attempt to “redirect” the child or offer the child an opportunity to “chill-out”. During redirection or “chill out” the teacher will work with the child to proactively solve the issue in a manner that allows the child to reflect and “make it right”. Children with chronic behavior conditions that pose a physical threat to themselves, other children or staff members will be asked to withdraw from the program.

INDOOR ACTIVITIES/FREE PLAY: Examples of materials used are blocks, dolls, floor play sets, puppets, dress up clothes, a variety of table toys, sand box, play kitchen, play dough, puzzles, numerous art supplies and fine motor manipulatives. Free play offers children a wide variety of interactive opportunities to discover and explore. It is a prime time when children make significant personal and social progress.

LABELING: All outerwear, including coats, hats, boots, etc., should be clearly marked with your child’s name.

PLAY CLOTHES: Please send your child in comfortable, washable play clothes that are easy to maneuver for restroom breaks.

SNACKS: Parents supply the snacks. The child’s teacher will provide a snack schedule. Parents only need to send in a food item, as water is served at snack time. We do ask that you bring foods which are healthier and avoid those that are loaded with sugar and heavier in fats. Some suggested items are crackers, Goldfish, granola bars, raisins, pretzels or whole fruit (sliced on-site.)

**SNACKS AND TREATS MUST BE STORE BOUGHT AND SENT IN ITS
ORIGINAL PACKAGING.**

BIRTHDAY SNACKS: Everyone loves to celebrate birthdays and we want your child to feel special on their day, please avoid cakes and cupcakes, both for the sugar, and the mess.

If there are children with food allergies in any given classroom, the teachers will convey this to their parents. Typically, dairy or nut allergies are the most common, and we would ask all parents to keep this in mind when sending a snack. Parents of children with extreme allergies will be asked to send in a reserve of approved snack items from home. These will be labeled and used for your child only. Peanut butter or other food restrictions will be made each year on a classroom-by-classroom basis. Your child’s teachers will inform you if your room will be a peanut butter or other items FREE ZONE.

TERMINATION: Parents will be asked to withdraw their children from the program if:

- Behavior poses a physical threat to self, other children or staff members.
- Chronic behavior conditions cause continuous disruption of classroom learning and environment.
- Chronic inability for child to separate from adult causing emotional distress to self or others
- Tuition payments are more than 1 month overdue.
- School is unable to meet the specific needs of the student.

**Chronic is defined as repetitive and continuous, not to extend over 3 weeks.*

TOILET USE AND HANDWASHING: Make it a habit to have your child use the bathroom right before leaving for school. This will ease the frustration of interrupted activities and lessen the chances for “accidents”. All children will be expected to wash hands after toilet use and before eating snacks.

Potty Policy - A fully potty-trained child is a child who can and will:

- 1) tell the teacher they need to go to the bathroom before going.
- 2) pull down their underwear, pants, or skirt and get their clothing back up without assistance.
- 3) wipe themselves after using the toilet.
- 4) get off the potty independently.
- 5) wash and dry hands and return to the class.

Our license requires that our preschool children be fully potty trained. At this age, accidents happen especially as children adjust to a new classroom, but if an accident occurs more than three times in one week, then the child must be removed from the school setting until they are fully potty trained.

TOYS: With the exception of Show and Tell, toys and similar personal possessions should not be brought to school for play. **GUNS, KNIVES, ROPES AND WEAPONS ARE NOT PERMITTED AT ANY TIME.** Books, nature items and educational items of interest are always great for children to share at Show and Tell.

VOLUNTEERS: The Preschool does not have a practice of utilizing classroom volunteers. Should a volunteer opportunity occur, that volunteer shall not have unsupervised contact with children (other than their own) while at First Church of God Preschool. All volunteers must stay visible to staff members at all times and undergo a PSOR (Public Sex Offender Registry) clearance prior to volunteering. All parents/volunteers must have a completed Parent/Adult Volunteer Form on file with the preschool before volunteering. ***Any supervised volunteer or staff who is registered***

on the public sex offender registry is prohibited from having any contact with any child in the preschool.

WHOLE GROUP PARTICIPATION: Group activity may include games, music & rhythm, stories, show & tell, songs, fingerplays, gym time and gross motor movements, etc. It is expected that some children will be shy about participating in large group activities at the beginning of the school year. Through encouragement and the buildup of self-esteem it is expected that all children eventually participate.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition costs for the 2023-2024 school year:

5-day classes	\$355/month*	payable by month/semester/year
3-day classes	\$195/month*	payable by month/semester/year
2-day classes	\$165/month*	payable by month/semester/year
Young Fives	\$ 390/month	payable by month/semester/year

*10% sibling discount per child.

NEW STUDENTS enrolling:

Before the 15th of the month will pay the full month's tuition plus the required registration fee.

After the 15th of the month will pay ½ of the month's tuition plus the required registration fee.

WITHDRAW: if your child *officially* withdraws from the Preschool:

Before the 15th of the month – ½ tuition will be refunded.

After the 15th of the month – no refund.

***September's tuition MUST be submitted PRIOR to attending your child's Preschool Play Date.**

LATE PAYMENT: Tuition payments will be considered late if not received by the 15th of the month and will be assessed a late fee of \$15.00.

DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS: If you become delinquent with one month's tuition, you will receive a written notice with payment expected immediately. Late payment rule applies. If you have not paid by the end of that month, your child will be dropped from our program until tuition and associated fees are paid.

ABSENCES: Full tuition is to be paid regardless of the reason your child is absent, unless your child has *officially* withdrawn (see General Information page). This applies to out of country vacations as well.

HOW TO PAY: You can pay through the ProCare: Childcare App. with credit card or checking account. You may also pay by check or cash and place it in the black tuition box located outside the preschool entrances. Checks should be made out to First Church of God Preschool and put in a tuition envelope provided on the tuition box. Please put your child's name in the memo section of your check to correctly credit your account. Do not give payments to your teacher.



NSF CHECKS: There will be a \$15.00 charge for NSF checks.

GENERAL INFORMATION

HISTORY: The First Church of God Nursery School was started in January 1967, with 18 children. Marilyn Reynolds was the founder, director and lead teacher. Jeanette Schroeder assisted her.

LICENSING: The First Church of God Preschool is fully licensed by the State of Michigan and maintains all state and local health and safety requirements. The center's License, Administrative Licensing Rules, and Licensing notebook (containing all past and present inspection reports) are accessible and available to all parents during regular school hours. These reports, including special investigations/corrective actions, can be found on the childcare licensing website: www.michigan.gov/michildcare

SNOW DAYS: During inclement weather, you will receive an email and text notification. Cancellation announcements will also be made on the local radio/tv stations: TV stations WNDU and WSBT. If school is cancelled anytime during the day due to the weather or any other condition beyond our control, we will use our ProCare: Childcare App. to notify you. Closings due to inclement weather will not be made up and no tuition will be refunded.

ADMISSIONS/WITHDRAWS: New students may apply for until January 31. Admissions are accepted based on classroom availability and student readiness. Any application for admission is subject to Director approval. Post Spring conference admissions may occur should extenuating circumstances apply.

If you need to withdraw at any time, *please give the Director two weeks' notice.* Financial policies concerning admissions and withdrawals apply (see Financial Policies).

PARKING LOT: We ask that you use extreme caution in the parking lot. Please drive slowly and be aware of our walking children and parents. Watch closely for moving vehicles as you walk to and from your car and always make sure your child is holding your hand! We do our best to keep the major walkways salted in the winter, but please be aware that parts of the parking lot can still be very icy.

SECURITY: The ramp and hallway entrance doors will be locked from 9:00 AM -11:20 AM, and 12:35 - 3:10 PM. The main entrance to the church will remain open Monday through Thursday.

SOLICITING: We will not post or distribute advertisements, fliers, posters, or notices of any kind with the exception of activities or programs that are offered by First Church of God ministries, free early childhood community services, the preschool, or by approval of the Director.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE: Please check-in and check-out your child at their assigned locations. Please inform your child's teacher of any alternate pickup information. Students will be allowed to leave the room only with their parents or adult authorized by their parents (must be listed on the emergency card). A photo ID may be required upon release.

Drop off time: AM classes – Doors open at 8:40 AM
 PM classes – Doors open at 12:30 PM

Pick up time: AM classes – Doors open at 11:30 AM
 PM classes – Doors open at 3:15 PM

It is extremely important, especially to your child, that they are dropped off and picked up on time. Our teachers also have personal commitments after class. Please cooperate by arranging your schedule accordingly and be on time for dropping off and picking up.

Please extend this courtesy to your child and their teachers by being there when the door opens. If late pick-ups become a habit, there will be late pick-up fee instated.

Parents arriving after scheduled pick-up times, will be penalized as follows:

- ***Parents will be charged a per-child late fee of \$20 for arrival 10 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time.***

Please note that all late fees will be added to the parent's tuition bill.

If a parent has not arrived to pick up their child and cannot be reached by phone within 15 minutes of pick-up time, we will call the emergency contact(s) listed on their enrollment forms.

FIRE AND TORNADO DRILLS: We will be conducting three (3) fire and two (2) tornado drills during the school year.

PRESCHOOL STAFF

The First Church of God Preschool staff continually strives to maintain the best possible age-appropriate and child-centered developmental curriculum for preschoolers. Each lead teacher meets the qualifications required by the State of Michigan's Childcare Licensing Department. All teachers are certified in adult, child and infant CPR. The state also requires First Aid training every three years and Bloodborne Pathogen training every year. Staff members are also required to obtain 16 hours of Early Childhood related training per year.

A comprehensive background check is required to be completed on all childcare staff and volunteers with supervised access to children. This background check includes FBI fingerprinting. Any supervised volunteer or staff who is registered on the public sex offender registry is prohibited from having any contact with any child in the preschool.

HEALTH CARE POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND RESOURCES

ACCIDENT/INJURY: Parents will be notified verbally by the teaching staff should a child experience a minor accident or injury (bump, scrape, fall, etc...) and be informed as to the immediate care taken (ice pack, band aid, comfort). Should a child experience an incident that requires more than minor attention they will be escorted to the office by staff and parents will be called immediately. More severe incidents/accidents will be documented on a student accident/injury report form and filed with the office and a copy of the report will be provided to the parent.

BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGENS: When performing general cleaning and contamination with blood or body fluids, all employees must wear disposable gloves and proper protection equipment prior to making any contact with blood or body fluids. This includes, but is not limited to, care and first aid treatment of a person as well as cleaning procedures for objects contaminated with body fluids. Employees use only disposable

items provided. When procedure is completed, disposable articles from each contact or cleanup are discarded into plastic trash bags that are marked for placement into the bio-medical waste bags.

ILLNESS AND KNOWING WHEN TO STAY HOME: Children enrolling in school will be exposed to a variety of illness and viruses. Children who attend daily must be in good health and free of communicable diseases. Calling and leaving a voicemail that your child is sick is greatly appreciated. Your notice will help us alert the others in your room so they can watch for symptoms in their own child.

Do not send children to school with any of the following:

- A fever of 100° or more
- Vomiting
- Excessively runny nose
- Pinkeye
- Diarrhea
- Persistent cough

Any child who develops these symptoms while at preschool will be isolated in the preschool office area until a parent or emergency contact can pick the child up.

WHEN CAN YOUR CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

- Children must be fever free and symptom free for 24 hours without aid of medication.
- In some cases, a note of “non-contagion” from a doctor will be required.

Parents will abide by the judgement of the Director or Assistant if they feel the child should be kept at home or sent home because of suspected illness. The good health of ALL our students is taken very seriously.

CLEANING/SANITIZING TOYS AND SURFACES: Toys put in a child’s mouth are placed in a bin to be washed and disinfected. Tabletops are cleaned/sanitized before and after eating and at the end of the day. Counters and doorknobs are cleaned/sanitized daily. Loose food, soil and debris are removed from the floor/carpet as needed. Soiled areas on floor/carpet are sprayed with detergent solution and cleaned with dry paper towels and allowed to dry. The custodian mops and waxes floors/scrubs carpet according to their schedule. Classrooms are vacuumed daily.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES: Impetigo, pink eye, ringworm, scabies, chicken pox, and head lice (and/or nits), are known as communicable diseases. If observed at school, parents will be contacted immediately and the child will be sent home for the appropriate treatment. If the disease is discovered at home, parents should contact the teacher or school office. In either case, the child will be readmitted to school only after treatment and a thorough check by office personnel. If, upon examination, the school designated personnel find no live lice or nits closer than ¼ inch from the scalp on the child, the child may re-enter the school. Parents will receive written notification if a confirmed case of head lice occurs in the classroom.

FATIGUE: Please see that your child has regular ample hours of sleep.

HAND WASHING PROCEDURE: Hands are to be rubbed together vigorously using warm running water and soap. Hands are dried with a single-use paper towel.

Teachers wash hands after using the bathroom or helping a child use the bathroom, after handling body fluids, wastes or discharge from nose or eyes, after messes, after handling a sick child, before preparing/serving food, before eating/drinking. Children's hands are washed after playing outside, after they use the toilet, after they have touched a child who may be sick or handled soiled items, before they eat/drink, and when they are soiled.

HEALTH FORM: Children must have a completed health form on file within 30 days of the start of school.

MEDICATION: Prescription or nonprescription, shall be given/applied by the teacher only with prior written permission from a parent. All medication shall be in its original container, stored according to instructions, and clearly labeled for a named child. Prescription medication shall have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name and instructions. The name and strength of the medication shall be given according to instructions. Medications will be kept out of the reach of children and returned to parent when expired or no longer needed. The teacher shall give/apply any medication according to the directions off the original container unless authorized by a written order of the physician. Topical nonprescription medication, including, but not limited to sunscreen and insect repellent requires written parental authorization annually. The preschool will maintain a record of time/amount of medication given/applied and the teacher who administered it.

PESTICIDE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: A notification shall be provided by the preschool to parents/guardians informing them that they will receive advance notice of pesticide applications. The notification shall specify two methods by which the advance notice of pesticides will be given.

NO SMOKING/VAPING: Smoking or vaping must NOT occur in or during both of the following:

1. In the building or on the property that is under the control of the preschool or church
2. On field trips and in vehicles when children are present

LOCAL HEALTH RELATED RESOURCES

ST. JOSEPH/BENTON HARBOR AREA

GENERAL HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Berrien County Health Department – Benton Harbor
2149 E. Napier Ave , Benton Harbor, MI 49022 269-926-7121

MENTAL HEALTH

Child & Family Services of Southwestern Michigan
2450 M-139, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 269-925-1725

Lory's Place (grief center)
445 Upton Drive, St. Joseph, MI 49085 269-983-2707

Riverwood Center – Benton Harbor
1485 M-139, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 269-925-0585

Samaritan Counseling Center
1850 Colfax, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 269-926-6199
2001 Niles Ave., St. Joseph, MI 49022 269-926-6199

Southwestern Medical Center Christian Counseling & Psychological Services
5675 Fairview Avenue, Stevensville, MI 49127 269-429-7727

PEDIATRICS

Barrett & Driscoll, MD's, P.C.
2516 Niles Avenue, St. Joseph, MI 49085 269-983-6518

InterCare Community Health Network – Benton Harbor
800 M-139, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 855-869-6900

Lakeside Healthcare Specialists
3950 Hollywood Rd, Suite 270, St. Joseph, MI 49085 269-983-0500

Dr M. Shah, MD PLC and Dr. A. Shah, MD
3800 Hollywood Road; Suite 102, St. Joseph, MI 49085 269-428-2727

Southwestern Medical Clinic
5515 Cleveland Avenue, Stevensville, MI 49127 269-429-6604

FIRST CHURCH OF GOD PRESCHOOL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

In the event of an emergency situation that is confined to the immediate area or evacuation of First Church of God Preschool 2627 Niles Ave. St. Joseph, Michigan Phone # 269 983-1816, one of the following plans shall be implemented.

In all situations, the caregiver in charge shall take:

- Orange Emergency Folders containing:
 - Attendance Lists
 - Student Emergency Cards
 - Student Medical Alerts
 - Emergency Plans
- Student Medications
- First Aid Kits

1. If the emergency is confined to the IMMEDIATE AREA of the childcare center (eg. Fire) the children will be relocated to the end of the school parking lot and if necessary will walk to the Tiny Tots Park across the street or if inclement weather they will walk to the closest building North of the parking lot (currently Dr. Floods). They will remain at this location, accompanied by the caregivers, while parents/emergency contacts are notified and arrangements are made for each individual child to be picked up.

a. In the event that a physical examination is necessary due to the nature of the emergency, a child would be transported to Specturm Healthcare (hospital) 1234 Napier Ave. St. Joseph Michigan 269 983-8300. Parents/emergency contacts will be informed of this location.

b. In the event of a tornado, children would remain at the childcare center until notice by “public safety” was given for the appropriate dismissal and parents/emergency contacts are informed.

2. In a more widespread emergency such as a flood, bomb threat, etc. requiring evacuation away from the childcare center, the children would be brought by the church bus and van to the First Congregational United Church of Christ at 2001 Niles Ave, St. Joseph, Michigan 269 983-5519. They will remain accompanied by caregivers while parents/emergency contacts are notified, arrangements for transportation home are made, or continuation of care is made.

3. This childcare center is within the ten-mile Emergency Planning Zones for commercial nuclear power stations. Parents/emergency contacts SHOULD NOT pick up their children from this childcare center. The children will be taken to a shelter outside the danger zone by St. Joseph Public Schools transportation. Listen for directions on TV or radio stations about where and when the children can be picked up

when it is safe. This childcare center will make every effort to contact parents as to the location of our shelter.

4. The Center uses the ProCare: Childcare App. as an automated calling system.