

# First Presbyterian Preschool Parent Handbook

Pre-K EDITION

2020-2021



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## Love Your Neighbor

*My message to our preschool families of 2020-2021*

***“Love your neighbor as yourself” - Matthew 22:39***

We are commanded to love our neighbor and to take care of our children. These times in our lives are overwhelming, uncertain, and challenging, but you know all this, and if you are like me, you are getting a little frustrated hearing about how crazy our world is all day long.

So... it is with happy hearts and much anticipation that on October 5<sup>th</sup> we are going to come together again. Welcome back to our First Presbyterian Preschool family!! We have new guidelines and protocols that will take some getting used to. It won't be too terribly difficult, because our first priority has always been keeping your child safe, healthy, and happy. It is more of learning new ways to do the same things we have always tried to do.

Mr. Rogers, from the most famous neighborhood of all, said, “Whether we’re giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That’s one of the things that connects us as neighbors – in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver.” It takes all of us to have a successful and happy life. The staff and I hope that we can offer something valuable to your child as he or she grows into his or her life.

Thank you again. Thank you again for waiting on us to reopen and learn new ways to navigate the changes to our special school. Thank you for your support and allowing us the privilege to be a part of your child’s life.

Welcome back to our neighborhood!

With love,

Jane



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Pre-K Edition  
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## **A Message from the Director**

Dear Preschool Families,

Welcome! I am so glad your family has chosen First Presbyterian Church Preschool Program. Here at First Presbyterian Church Preschool, we strive to offer an educational learning experience that will grow your child in mind, body, and spirit. This school, this Christ-filled community is a blessed place to be always. We are honored that you have entrusted our preschool to provide a rich and stimulating beginning school foundation for your child as they grow into his or her own special person! My ultimate goal for this year is to have each child feel important, loved, and respected for their individuality. I will work closely with our wonderful staff to ensure your child's "first school experience" is one that is filled with much love in a secure environment.

I am here to support you in any way I can. Along with your child's teachers, I will work with you to have open communication. I have an open door policy for any need both great and small, and I am always available to listen to any concerns, wants, or fresh idea you may have to share with me. Working together, we can provide the best possible preschool experience for your child. We are excited to begin a new year together! We pray for our students and their families and we are certainly blessed to have you as a member of our preschool family! I look forward to a positive, exciting, and rewarding school year with you and your child!

Fondly,

Jane W. Blackerby

Director

*"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it".  
Proverbs 22:6*



# **Mission, Philosophy, and Objectives**

First Presbyterian Church recognizes that our Preschool has a unique function to perform. Through its curriculum, we offer a half-day enrichment program committed to Christ-centered, quality childhood education in partnership with family and church within a loving, caring atmosphere.

Under the direction of teachers who love and honor Christ, a conscious effort will be made to help each child build a healthy self-image. This entails helping the child through many experiences to discover who he or she is and to realize that he or she is a child of great worth and a child of God.

Through play, discovery, and planned activities for learning, the child matures in an understanding of who they are in a relationship with their teachers and peers. Our teachers make every effort to consider each child's uniqueness, talents, and development when planning, thus allowing each child to proceed at their own pace in the learning process.

In our efforts to promote growth of the "whole child", we strive to pursue the following objectives:

- to provide the opportunity for the child to grow and develop in honoring Jesus in all that they do.
- to provide opportunities for each child to have successful learning experiences in a secure and loving environment.
- to demonstrate respect, acceptance, and appreciation towards each child in our care.
- to provide learning experiences that promote motor, social, and intellectual growth.
- to encourage self-expression, investigation, experimentation, and to foster the inquisitive nature that children possess.
- to create welcoming classrooms and maintain small class sizes with appropriate teacher/student ratios.
- to work in partnership with parents through open and consistent communication.

We maintain a highly motivated and enthusiastic staff dedicated to providing the best care for every child attending First Presbyterian Preschool.

# Curriculum

First Presbyterian Preschool offers a well-rounded curriculum that integrates Biblical principles into daily activities and interactions. Children are given the opportunity to grow at their own pace, and teachers work to meet each child at their own particular skill level for each activity. We recognize that children learn best by doing, which is why play is such an integral part of our preschool curriculum. Learning through discovery and interactions with peers is one of the most natural ways a child can grow.

*"Play is the work of the child." ~Maria Montessori*

At our Preschool you will see:

- learning centers and child-oriented play activities including:

Block Play	Coloring/Writing
Housekeeping and Dress Up	Books
Puzzles	Sand/Water Play
Playdoh	Art Activities
Easel Drawing/Chalk	Motor Manipulative Toys
Table Games	Science Activities

- children practicing age appropriate fine motor skills such as cutting, pasting, and tracing.
- children practicing age appropriate gross motor skills such as climbing, sliding, kicking, and throwing during our outdoor play activities.
- children exposed to age appropriate skill activities to explore colors, shapes, numbers, letters, and words.
- children learning through song and dance.
- daily circle time where children explore topics such as the weather and calendar skills and practice a monthly Bible verse.

Monthly themes are planned by our staff and communicated to parents through newsletters and bulletins. Curriculum for each age level is naturally different from one another, and we plan activities that are appropriate for each class.

# COVID-19 GUIDELINES

## School Drop off / Pick-up – Staggered

*Mrs. Barnes' Class* 8:45-11:45

*Mrs. Smith's Class* 9:15-12:15



### Drop-off Protocol:

*Mrs. Barnes' Class* - 8:45

*Mrs. Smith's Class* - 9:15

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue courtyard with 6 foot social distance markers, spacing out adults and children in line.
- Masks will be required on all adults and recommended on children. Acclimating the children to wearing face masks is another kindergarten readiness skill that we are trying to implement. Thank you for your cooperation in helping us teach this important school readiness skill to your child.
- Director will be performing health checks on students, recording their temperatures, and answering questions.
- Adults will not be allowed past the health check point.
- Assistants will be gathering children and escorting them to class.
- Hand sanitizer station will be available at arrival.

### Pick-up Protocol:

*Mrs. Barnes' Class* - 11:45

*Mrs. Smith's Class* - 12:15

- The Director will be outside facilitating pick-up.
- Cars will enter from State Street onto Third Avenue, forming a line at the sidewalk, if possible.
- In your September packet, you will receive two car tags. One of these tags should be displayed prominently in your front passenger side window at pick-up. This will help speed up the pick-up process and add security.
- Teachers and assistants will bring children outside.
- Masks will be required on all adults and recommended on children (please see note above).
- Adults remain in their car until the child is brought to you by the Director, then adults will assist the child safely into their vehicle.
- If you do not have your car tag, you need to park your vehicle and wait for the Director to speak with you. She will not be able to assist you until all other children have been picked up. Please do not forget your car tag!

### Room Protocol:

Teachers will be in classrooms assisting with mask removal and thorough hand washing prior to beginning the school day.

### General Information:

- No outside visitors allowed.
- No scheduled events with families.
- No birthdays with outside food, the school will provide all food.
- Snack fee will be charged this year; no outside snacks required/allowed.
- Newsletters will be sent home to provide ongoing communication and will include a monthly calendar.

- New ways to keep parents involved will be implemented, including increased pictures and social media use.
- Increased cleaning sanitation and room cleaning procedures being put in place during the day and after the class day has concluded.

### **School Info General:**

- All teachers are to wear masks or shields.
- All teachers will practice social distancing with each other.
- Each child will have a personal storage box kept in their cubby (personal crayons, playdoh, masks, etc....).
- The number of toys available to the children will be reduced, and all toys will be sanitized. They will be changed out regularly to minimize cross-contamination.
- Orientation meetings and other events to be held virtually until further notice.
- ***While we are still enduring this virus, we will watch and listen to what other school systems are doing. At any time if we are informed or told that we need to close (similar to last March 2020) we may have to close the Preschool again.***

### **Communication**

The safety and health of our school and staff is dependent on strong and open communication. We can not afford to have children brought to school sick or loaded up on Motrin. We want to keep the school open and provide this experience for your children, but the success depends on your willingness to be on board. Grandparents and older caregivers comprise the majority of our preschool's drop off and pick up so we really want to protect them during those times (and all other times as well!). **Children with a known fever must be fever-free for 48 hours before returning to school.** *Email will be the primary method of communication, so please check your email regularly for messages from the Director.*

### **Staff protocol:**

- The Director will be the only Preschool staff member allowed to use the copier in the church work room.
- Daily temperature and health checks upon arrival.
- Masks or Face Shields are required at all times.
- Social distancing required between adults at all times.
- Comprehensive substitute plan in place prior to school start.

### **Preschool protocol if a member of our school family tests positive for COVID-19**

- Please do not forget that our Preschool is bound by HIPPA privacy laws, but I know everyone will want to have detailed information if a positive test is found. We will provide as much information as possible to keep everyone safe.
- If a member of your household tests positive, you will need to keep your child home for 10 days and have clearance from the doctor or Health Department before returning to Preschool.
- If we send a child or staff member home with clear symptoms, or they are found to have a positive case, that individual must stay home for 10 days and have clearance from the doctor or health department before returning to the Preschool.
- If a positive test is found, we will inform all of the preschool families of the test and the name the classroom where the case occurred.

# Behavior Management

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management for children. When children engage in positive and understanding interactions with adults and others, they develop strong self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on how we believe children learn and develop, our Preschool will practice the following discipline policy:

We...

- DO praise, reward, and encourage the children.
- DO set limits for the well-being of the children.
- DO model appropriate behavior for the children.
- DO modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
- DO listen to the children.
- DO provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior to the children.
- DO provide logical consequences for repeated inappropriate behavior.
- DO treat the children as people and respect their needs and feelings.
- DO ignore minor misbehaviors.
- DO explain things to children on their level so that they understand our expectations.
- DO use short supervised periods of “time-out” appropriate to the child’s age. For example: two years old, two minutes; three years old, three minutes.
- DO remain consistent in our expectations and utilization of the behavior management policy.

# Pre-K Program

**Mrs. Barnes' Class:** 8:45 AM-11:45 AM

**Mrs. Smith's Class:** 9:15 AM-12:15 PM

Drop-off and pick-up will occur at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue/Office entrance to the church. Upon arrival, please put on your face mask and have your child wear his or her face mask as well. Acclimating the children to wearing face masks is another kindergarten readiness skill that we are trying to implement. Thank you for your cooperation in helping us teach this important school readiness skill to your child.

Please hold your child's hand as you walk him or her to the check-in point. Markers will be placed at 6 foot intervals so that social distancing can be observed. When you and your child arrive at the Director's table, the Director will perform a health check and take your child's temperature. Please inform the Director of the name of the person who will be picking up your child that day. The Director will record this information on your child's record. An assistant will escort your child to his or her classroom. Parents will not be allowed past the check-in point.

At Pick-Up, please enter from State Street and park along the sidewalk beside the church if possible. We will have a designated space reserved in front of the church for pick-up purposes. Please be sure your car tag is prominently displayed in the front passenger side window. The teachers and assistants will bring your children out of the building, and the Director will walk your child toward your vehicle. As they approach, please get out of your vehicle and assist your child in safely getting into your car.

If you do not have your car tag at pick-up, please park your car and wait for the Director to assist you. The Director will assist you when all other children have been picked up.

Children will be engaged in a variety of activities that give them the opportunity to work independently, in small groups, and with the teachers to gain the skills needed to be successful academically and socially. Play remains an integral part of the learning process in our preschool curriculum, and we will utilize play to address the skills needed to prepare your child for Kindergarten.

## **Classroom Reminders**

- Be kind to one another.
- Share and take turns with your friends.
- Be a good listener.
- Help clean up.
- Remember your manners: say "Please" and "Thank You"

***Do for others what you would want them to do for you.***

**Toys** Bringing special toys from home is discouraged. We work on the concept of sharing, but personal toys make sharing more difficult.

**Occasions** We will be unable to welcome families for special or seasonal occasions this year. Please discuss birthday arrangements with the director well ahead of time.

**Dress** Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes and shoes that are appropriate for the playground (no sandals/slick bottom shoes, flip flops, or crocs). Please bring an extra change of clothes in a plastic bag clearly marked with your child's name. Include a shirt, bottoms, underwear, and

socks. We will exchange clothing when the seasons change.

**Show & Tell** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not be able to have show and tell this year.

**Conferences** Conferences will be different this year. Your child's teacher will communicate the specifics of holding conferences later in the year. Parents are encouraged to communicate any concerns to the classroom teacher throughout the year as well. We are here to work in partnership with you as your child prepares for Kindergarten.

## **Combination Classes**

As our class formation is heavily dependent on student enrollment, we are often in the situation of needing to form combination classes. These combinations may be two and three year olds or three and four year olds together. We will never create a class that combines all three ages, as that would not offer the best experience for any of the children involved.

Great care is taken to provide differentiated instruction in combination classes. We are able to meet each child's needs since we incorporate whole group and individual instruction into our daily schedule. Should you have any questions about combination class grouping, please feel free to contact the Director.



# General Policies

## **ABSENCES**

If you know your child will be absent or late, please notify the Preschool as soon as possible. The Director may be reached at 248-2140, ext. 205.

## **ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The staff of the Preschool will comply with the provisions of the Child Abuse Reporting Act. Suspected cases of abuse and neglect will be reported to the Director. The Director will report suspected cases to the Department of Social Services.

## **BIRTHDAY PARTIES**

We love to celebrate birthdays at our Preschool, but unfortunately, we will not allow families to come into the school to help us celebrate this year. We are also asking that you discuss the birthday snack with the director ahead of time, since our procedures are different this year.

## **BOOKBAGS**

Children will not be allowed to bring a bookbag to school this year, though that policy may change later in the year as circumstances change. We will keep you informed.

Your child's weekly work and art, homework from the teacher, and any message from the director will be sent home at pick up every Friday. There will be designated bins at drop off to return signed papers, homework, etc.

## **BREAKFAST**

Please be sure that your child has breakfast prior to arriving at Preschool each day. We discuss what we ate for breakfast at circle time, and we all know that a healthy breakfast gives us the energy we need to start our day!

## **CALENDAR AND CLOSINGS**

The Preschool calendar is designed to coordinate with the schedule of Davidson County Schools. In the event of inclement weather, we will follow the decision of **Davidson County Schools** regarding closings or delays. **On delay days, we will begin school at 10:00am regardless of whether it is a one or two hour delay. In the event of a three hour delay, the Preschool will be closed for the day.** Should we experience an abundance of inclement weather days, we may adjust our calendar to provide make up days for our students. In the event that the schools have returned to online-only classes, we will make our own decision regarding closings or delays. Please check your email for a note from the Director or look for a text from your child's teacher. We will also post our decision on our Facebook page.

As we move into inclement weather season, more information and changes may be implemented. If in doubt, please check your email for a message from the director of the Preschool.

## **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

By North Carolina law, teachers are required to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. If such cases arise, the alerted staff member will report to the Director. The Director will then notify the Protective Services Unit of the Department of Social Service. The Director will keep the Board Chair informed of this action and the results.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

The staff will keep a file indicating how to get in touch with parents, who to call if parents are unavailable, and the name of the child's physician. Current parent work numbers and home numbers must be kept in each child's file. If your work or home number changes, please be sure to get that new information to the Director.

## **ILLNESS**

**Please do not bring your child to Preschool if they have had a fever over 100 degrees, vomited, had diarrhea, or have shown other signs of illness within a 48 hour period.** If your child becomes sick at school or has been left sick with us, we will call you to come for them. If your child is absent due to illness, please call us so we can keep an account and, if necessary, notify other parents about communicable diseases.

**\*\*If your child has symptoms of a possible communicable disease (lice, impetigo, strep throat, chicken pox), or of the flu or COVID please keep him/her home until you are certain that there is no danger to the other children.** Please contact the school immediately if your child contracts a contagious disease. The school will, in turn, notify other parents of possible exposure. While information concerning possible exposure will be shared with other families, we will not disclose the origin. Your child must be symptom-free for 48 hours before returning to school.

**Please thoroughly read and familiarize yourself with the COVID guidelines included in this handbook regarding the Preschool's additional restrictions for COVID cases.**

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

North Carolina state law requires the following:

*"A certificate of immunization should be presented to the child care operator for each child who attends the facility. The child care operator should check the certificate to ensure the child meets immunization requirements." The law further states, "If a child's immunization record lacks evidence of required vaccination, the parent or guardian must be notified about the deficiency."*

Our Preschool policy is to uphold this law without exception. Therefore, if an immunization record is incomplete, the Preschool must notify the parents/guardian in writing that the file must be completed and/or updated. Written verification of proper immunization must be received within 30 days of notice. Please include a copy of your child's birth certificate (it does not need to be a certified copy) with their Physician's Statement and immunization record at the beginning of each year.

## **SAFE CHILD PICK-UP**

Safety is our number one priority when it comes to your child. To ensure the safety of each and every child, we have several policies in place. You will complete a Safe Child Pick-Up form at the beginning of each school year attending, this which will give you the opportunity to name those adults who are allowed to pick up your child from preschool. **If you have any custody papers, please provide us with a copy of those as they may affect who is allowed to pick up your child.**

You will be issued two car tags for your car. Please display one in the passenger's side of the front window during pick-up. The director will begin to lead your child toward your car. At that time, please get out of your car and assist your child in getting to – and into – your vehicle safely.

If you do not have your car tag, you will need to park your vehicle and wait for the director to speak with you. The Director will assist you after all other children have been picked up.

We also ask that you let the director know at drop off each day who to expect for pick up that day. The director will make a note of this in your child's records. If it is someone we are unfamiliar with, we may ask to see a photo ID at pick-up. Please understand that this is solely for the safety of your child.

## **SEPARATION**

Leaving your family at the door is a new and frightening experience for many children. We will do all that we can to ease the transition and help the fears (and any tears) subside. In doing so, we ask your help. Please do not linger after drop off to peep in doors or windows. This will make separation more difficult. Please know that we will contact you if your child needs you.

In order for your child to have as positive and happy an experience of entering school as possible, we suggest the following guidelines.

- Apprehension for you and your child is normal. Relax. Attitudes are important. Your child can feel your hesitancy.
- Expect that your child will go to school happy and have a good time.
- Please view our online videos to familiarize yourself with your child's teacher before school starts. Use the teacher's name frequently, so that the child becomes familiar with it.
- NEVER sneak away without saying goodbye to your child.

When it is time to say goodbye, do so and then leave quickly and without hesitation, without looking back. Once you are gone, the child will usually settle down. We will be glad to call you and give you a progress report. We will not let your child cry uncontrollably.

- Please do not hang around outside the church. If you would like to leave a cell phone number, we will let you know when your child is feeling better and is busy.
- Please do not peep in the windows to check on your child; it makes separation harder on everyone. Some of the other children may see you and wonder or worry about their families.
- In some cases the teacher may take the upset child on a tour of the building or to get a drink or water thus helping to keep the other children from getting upset. Usually a child will be ready to stop crying and get back to the classroom to play after a short time away.
- If separation seems too much at first, we may ask you to pick up your child early for a few days. In some cases, having someone else bring your child to school is an easier transition.
- A little extra time together and a few extra hugs are always helpful during the first day of school. Try not to ask too many questions about school; let the time be as gentle, casual, and non-threatening as possible.
- To help foster feelings of independence and self-esteem, we ask that the children walk into the building at drop off and leave the same way at the end of the day. Separation is much more pleasant and secure for the children when they walk in on their own, rather than being carried. Because separation is such a difficult time for children and parents, we want to work with you to make the beginning of each day as smooth as possible. Working together, we can give your child confidence when separating.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Please use great discretion when using social media with pictures or words concerning the Preschool, the staff members, and its students. Public abuse of the above stated will not be tolerated, and actions will be taken at the discretion of the Director.

## **FACEBOOK**

FPC Preschool maintains a public Facebook page for parents to access. We share pictures for you to observe the daily activities and fun events of our preschool students.

## **PLAYGROUND**

Due to COVID restrictions, the playground is not open this year during the school day. The teachers will be taking your child outside for recreation in the Preschool courtyard, weather permitting. If we are allowed to resume use of the playground, we will let you know at that time of any change in our policy.

# **Registration Policies**

## **WAITING LIST**

In order to place a child's name on the waiting list, a parent must contact the Director and provide current information about the child. The parent will then be informed of the child's position on the list. Priority for the children on the waiting list will be as follows:

1. Children of the Preschool Staff.
2. Children currently enrolled at the Preschool.
3. Children whose families are members of First Presbyterian Church.
4. All other children placed on the waiting list.

Within each category, the date the child was placed on the waiting list and the date care is needed is also given priority.

If a family is offered a space they have requested and it is refused, the family may remain on the waiting list but will go to the bottom of the list in their category.

Program placement is dependent upon the age of the child by August 31st of the year in which they wish to enroll.

## **REGISTRATION**

Registration for the next school year is held in February and March. All current children are given the opportunity to enroll first. Persons on the waiting list will be called when a space is available for their child.

## **WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM**

The Preschool requires a written notice of a child's withdrawal from the program, submitted to the Director two weeks or more prior to the child's last day. Tuition will continue to be charged until such written notice is received.

If parents withdraw their child from the Preschool before the end of the school year, but plan to be enrolled for the coming year, they will need to pay the current year's tuition balance or the child will be placed at the bottom of the waiting list.

The Preschool may discontinue a child's enrollment if the parent fails to provide current physical and immunization records, if there is habitual abuse of the program policies, or if tuition is not paid.

# Snack and Peanut-Free Policy

In an effort to provide the safest possible environment for the children in our care, First Presbyterian Preschool has operated under a peanut-free policy since August 30, 2007.

First Presbyterian Preschool is a "Peanut-Free" facility. We often have students with peanut allergies in our care, and in order to provide the safest environment we only serve peanut-free snack options.

**We will reinstate a snack fee this year.** The snack fee is \$25.00 and is a one-time, annual fee. Prior to this year, we have utilized snack donations from parents to provide snacks for our children, but due to the pandemic, the director will purchase snacks for the students this year. Please pay your snack fee by October 10.

