



**Little Shepherds Preschool
Parent Handbook**

PARENT HANDBOOK TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 Welcome
- 5 Mission Statement
- 6 Program
- 7 Admission & Program Policy
- 11 Discipline Policy
- 12 Health Policy
- 13 Parent Teacher Communication
- 13 General Information

Dear Little Shepherds Preschool Families,

Little Shepherds was a vision of First Presbyterian Church, Lakeland. It has become a reality due to the perseverance and dedication of many lay people and staff members who saw the need for a weekday ministry to young children and their families. Little Shepherds was established in 1997 in response to parent requests for consistently affordable, quality child care in a safe and spiritually nurturing environment. Little Shepherds seeks to offer support to parents as they raise children in our complex and ever-changing society.

Little Shepherds is a church-supported program. It is regulated by the Polk County Health Department/Department of Children and Families with oversight from the session, pastors, and church administration of First Presbyterian Church (FPC), Lakeland. It is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. with the option of early drop-off and late pick-up. Little Shepherds serves children from three months through four years.

We are delighted to have your family participating in our program, and we have developed this handbook to give you some insight into our ministry. We want our families to know and understand the goals of our program. We want you to know that we are here to work in partnership with your family to nurture your child's development and make this an enriching experience. We encourage you to ask questions and make suggestions as your child participates with us. Your input into this ministry is extremely valuable to us.

Carrie Joyner, Director
Little Shepherds

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Little Shepherds at FPC is to communicate God's message of love and redemption through Christ by prayer, teaching, example, worship and play. Application of His Word will be taught at the young child's level in order to equip each child to be Little Shepherds in their homes, school, churches and community, growing up into Christ, mature in their faith and making wise decisions.

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.
-Proverbs 22.6 NRSV

PURPOSE

The purpose of Little Shepherds is:

- To provide each child the opportunity to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually to the child's fullest potential.
- To provide a safe, clean environment that provides support and nurturing for the children of our congregational members and children from the surrounding community.
- To express the message of God's love through Jesus Christ by providing quality care to children.
- To be good stewards and utilize the beautiful facilities God has provided.
- To live out the gospel of Jesus Christ with the little ones and their families.

PROGRAM

At First Presbyterian Church, Little Shepherds is a developmentally appropriate program designed to enhance the growth of young children ages three months through four years of age. We believe that young children learn through play. Play is their work. In the Little Shepherds program we provide a variety of play activities in an open, nurturing atmosphere. By structuring a safe and stimulating environment, the staff provides experiences which allow children to develop trust in themselves and others, as they interact with people, materials and ideas. Each morning the children will experience age appropriate toys, explore activity centers, (which include art, music, block play, dramatic play, science, and language development) and participate in creative group activities and story time. Weather permitting, they will enjoy outdoor fun on the playground and walks on our grounds. A mid-morning snack is provided and a bag lunch from home is served about noon.

Curriculum

Little Shepherds uses the Wee Learn Curriculum, along with other research based and developmentally appropriate resources, as a foundation for the program and daily lessons. Wee Learn is faith-based and approved by the Early Learning Coalition of Polk County.

Led by faith and grounded in evidence-based practices, programs using the Wee Learn philosophy and curriculum work to support children and families. Children's individual differences and learning styles are considered as they learn through play and interactions with supportive early childhood teachers to maximize each child's learning potential.

ADMISSION AND PROGRAM POLICY

Age

A child may begin coming to Little Shepherds as young as three months and as old as four years.

Registration

There is a non-refundable, registration fee that is due at the time of registration. Preschoolers may register for a two, three or five day program. If the Preschool Program is full, your registration form will be placed on a waiting list and the registration fee will not be due until a space is secured for your child.

Days/Hours

Monday through Friday. The day begins at 9:00 a.m. and all children are to be picked up by 1:00 p.m.

We do offer extended hours at Little Shepherds from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. These hours are available to all preschoolers for an additional charge.

Admission and Registration Procedures

1. A tour of the preschool.
2. A facility and classroom visitation which allows parent and child to become comfortable with the facility, staff, and program.
3. Completion of registration application and payment of a non-refundable annual registration fee.
4. Completion of enrollment packet and health forms from your child's physician must be completed prior to your child starting the program. Please bring in an updated immunization record when additions are made.
5. Little Shepherds extends child care to all families regardless

of race, color, origin, sex, or religion. It is sometimes necessary to redirect children with special needs to another child care facility as we may not be able to facilitate the child's growth and development. Each case will be handled individually, by the Director.

Re-Enrollment Procedures

In February of each year, a re-enrollment form will be sent to the parent of each child currently enrolled. FPC congregational members who have children eligible for enrollment will have the opportunity to register at this time. Re-enrollment is open only to those in good standing with Little Shepherds policies.

Priority in Enrollment

Children will be admitted in the following priority:

1. Children whose parents are members of FPC are given first priority for enrollment.
2. Children currently enrolled and wanting to return will receive priority after church members.
3. Siblings of current students.
4. After March 1 of each school year, any openings that are available will be filled with children who have been on the waiting list.
5. Open enrollment

Staff

We have a committed staff who consistently model God's great love for the children, their friends and their families. Our staff is carefully selected for their educational background, experience, and understanding of the needs of young children. We employ individuals who can work in a loving, patient, calm and creative manner with small children. The staff receives ongoing professional development by attending in-service training and conferences in the field of Early Childhood Education.

The Ratio of Children to Staff

Our guaranteed children-to-staff ratios are based on requirements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for a "high quality" program.

| Age | <u>Children to Staff</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Infants to 12 months | 3/1 |
| 12 - 24 months | 5/1 |
| 24 - 36 months | 7/1 |
| 3 years | 8/1 |
| 4 years | 8/1 |

Tuition

Tuition payments are due the 1st of every month, August - May. A late charge of \$10 will be assessed on all accounts paid after the 10th of each month. If tuition is not received by the 15th of each month, your child will not be able to attend classes, and this could potentially result in loss of placement at Little Shepherds Preschool. Tuition will not be reimbursed if your child is withdrawn after the 1st of the month. Payments can be made by check, payable to FPC or online with a credit or debit card.

Health Regulations for Enrollment

Little Shepherds requires all enrolled children to have a current health examination form (DH 3040) and a Florida Certificate of Immunization (DH 680) or a Religious Exemption form (DH 681).

Arrival

Children must be brought to their classroom and signed in by a parent. Please provide staff any additional information pertaining to the child's care for that day (e.g. your child did not sleep well the night before, your child is teething, your family is moving, etc.).

Departures

Children may leave the preschool **only** with their parent or an adult authorized by their parent. The names of all authorized adults must be on file. To authorize additional individuals on a one time or emergency basis, you must call the preschool office. A photo ID will be required at the time of pick-up.

Security

Little Shepherds Preschool is kept locked at all times during the school day. The doors leading into the Preschool Office are opened for drop off and pick up during the following times: 8:30-9:15 a.m., 12:45-1:15 p.m., and 1:45-2:15 p.m. For your convenience, there is a doorbell located on the stained glass column across from the Preschool Office. If you need access to the preschool, please ring the doorbell and someone will open the door.

Promptness

The staff appreciates cooperation with parents picking up their child on time. To cover staff expense for a late child pick up, parents will be billed \$5 for the first fifteen minutes late, and \$1 per minute thereafter. All late charges will be billed to your account.

DISCIPLINE\DISMISSAL POLICY

For young children, organization and management of the environment plays an important role in encouraging positive behavior. Our goal is to create a program and a physical environment that are safe but allow for exploration, choice of appropriate activities and the experiences necessary for the development of social, intellectual and motor skills.

Our faith and trust in God's love for us all are reflected in our approach to discipline. We have the privilege of sustaining a loving environment for children, and practicing the idea that children can be disciplined in a positive and gentle manner.

Our role is to provide a firm, consistent and fair set of limits. Teachers will discipline a child based upon an understanding of individual needs and appropriate behavior of children at varying developmental levels. Simple, understandable rules have been established so that expectations and limitations are clearly defined. Choices are offered at every opportunity and positive redirection is utilized whenever possible. Discipline is constructive in nature. Corporal punishment or belittling comments are prohibited.

All teachers and care givers are to show respect for the child and expect respect in return. They are to set an example of self-control and good manners. When a teacher says "no," they are to help the child understand the reason. A "time out" may be called if the child loses his temper or disobeys repeatedly. The child is never isolated from the group. A teacher will help the child understand the reason for the "time out" and the correct behavior that is expected. The child will be given a chance to make an amends or apologize when appropriate and made to feel comfortable before returning to the group. "Time out" is used according to age and should never exceed three minutes for 3-year-olds, four minutes for 4-year-olds, etc.

Any child who exhibits overly aggressive behavior which endangers other children or teachers or which results in uncontrollable disruption of a healthy classroom environment, may be subject to suspension or dismissal at the discretion of the Director. Each incident of this nature will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Every effort will be made to cooperate with the child's parents in correcting such behavior during the time of suspension or dismissal, and the child may be re-enrolled upon proof that such a behavior pattern has been addressed and corrected.

HEALTH POLICY

Illness

To minimize any spreading of disease between children and for the health of the children and staff, parents must keep their child/children home when he or she shows symptoms of infection or illness. Please use the following as a guide to whether your child should stay home: has had a fever during the previous 24 hours; has a cold with a nasal discharge and/or constant cough; has symptoms of a possible communicable disease. These symptoms may include reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, diarrhea or abdominal pain. Please notify the preschool immediately when your child has a communicable disease. Children must be symptom free for 24 hours prior to their return to preschool.

Children who have a persistent runny nose, rash or skin condition due to allergies, or asthma, must provide documentation of the condition from a doctor before the child can return to preschool.

If the child becomes ill during class time, he or she will be helped to rest quietly in isolation from other children. The parent will be called and asked to come immediately to pick up their child.

Medication

The staff at Little Shepherds will not dispense medication to your child. Parents are welcome to come during the day and administer medication to their child. For children with allergies who require an Epi-Pen/Auvi Q, the following is required: The Epi-Pen/Auvi Q must be in its original box with the child's name and expiration date on the box. Parents must also sign a Medical Authorization Form each year.

Emergencies

In life threatening situations, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to the nearest health care facility. Parents will be notified immediately in the event of an emergency.

PARENT TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Feel free to request a conference with your child's teacher at any time. Conferences are good opportunities for you to both share insights into your child's behavior at home and to find out how they are doing in our program.

Daily Contact

All parents will be provided with a classroom email to communicate directly with your child's teachers. Parents should refrain from contacting teachers through the use of cell phones or text messages and all forms of social media.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Clothing

Children in our program are active. They will be using expressive materials including paint, sand and water. They will be involved in climbing and running activities. Please dress them appropriately

for play. **Sturdy shoes are required.** Please do not send your child to preschool dressed in distracting or inappropriate clothing. Also, label all personal items with your child's first and last name. An extra set of labeled clothes including underwear and socks must be brought each day in the child's diaper bag or backpack.

Toys/Items from Home

Please have your child keep their personal toys at home to avoid any lost or broken toys or difficulty sharing a favorite toy. In some of our classes there will be opportunities for "show and tell."

Diapers

Disposable diapers and pull-ups are to be provided by the parents. Each child's diaper will be checked routinely.

Toilet Readiness for Toddlers and Twos

The staff will support and aid any reasonable efforts made by the parent and child when acquiring this new skill. Before beginning potty training with your child, please make sure that your child is showing signs that he/she is ready to begin potty training. Parents will need to send in additional changes of clothing (including socks and shoes) while the children are becoming toilet trained. Children who have two potty accidents in one day will be placed in a pull-up/diaper for the remainder of the day.

Toilet Requirements

Children are required to be toilet trained upon entering the three and four year old classes. Children who have continual toilet accidents will be asked to stay home for a specified time to allow them to acquire this skill.

Food

Infants:

Each child must have enough bottles and food each day to sustain them. Each bottle, container, and utensil must be

non-breakable and labeled. Please help us by preparing your child's supplies as follows: Label every item with the child's first and last name.

Bottles: Dry formula needs to be measured and placed in a non-breakable bottle. We will add warm water only. Liquid formula or breast milk needs to be measured into ready-to-use bottles. We will warm in hot water before feeding.

Cereal: Measure cereal into a ready-to-use-covered bowl. We will add warm water or warm formula/breast milk only as requested.

Toddlers/Preschoolers:

Snacks: A midmorning snack will be provided for your child. The snack menu is posted in the Preschool Office. Please advise the teachers of any and all food allergies that your child may have.

Lunch: A lunch is to be brought each day in a labeled, insulated lunch box/container. All lunches must meet the nutritional needs for a child of his/her age group (please see nutritional handout). All lunches must have an ice pack to keep food cold. It is important that the lunch be ready to eat so your child can feed himself/herself. Toddlers and preschoolers have the desire and ability to feed themselves. Sandwiches or finger foods are recommended.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special. We encourage parents to participate in their child's celebration by bringing treats for **all** of the children in their child's classroom. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher.

Due to health regulations, please make sure that all birthday treats are store bought, instead of made from home.

Child Abuse

Our teachers are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse to the Department of Children and Families.

Cooperation

Parents are expected to understand and cooperatively comply with the policies and regulations governing our program. If, after discussion with the Director and the Little Shepherds Advisory Council, a family is unable to resolve differences regarding the operation, policies, and/or procedures of the preschool, they may be asked to consider other options for their preschooler.

It is a privilege of our preschool,
staff & church to teach, love and
guide your children through
their preschool years.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve your family!

NOTES & QUESTIONS



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

175 Lake Hollingsworth Dr.
Lakeland, FL 33801

www.fpclakeland.org | 863.686.7187