



**St. Petersburg First
United Methodist Church
PRESCHOOL**

– Come Grow with Us! –

**St Petersburg First United Methodist Church
Preschool Handbook
2023-2024**

*St Petersburg First United Methodist Church Preschool
a ministry of St Pete First United Methodist Church of Saint Petersburg*

www.StPeteFirst.org/preschool

Located in the heart of Downtown St. Pete
at the corner of 2nd Street & 3rd Avenue North
212 3rd Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

727-822-8767

PCLB License #C870138

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St. Petersburg First
United Methodist Church



SUNDAY SERVICES

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP // 8 AM & 11 AM • CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP // 9:30 AM
212 3rd Street N, St. Petersburg, FL 33701 • 727-894-4661 • www.StPeteFirst.org

Revised 7/7/23

Welcome Letter from the Pastor

To Our St. Pete First Preschool Family!

One of the things I have come to understand is how important it is to know your children are not only safe but have an exceptional opportunity to learn. At St. Pete First United Methodist Church, we embrace this notion and employ it in everything we do in our preschool. Under the leadership of our Director Alicia Clements, I am so excited about today and our future.

Your experience with us will be different in that we are not a day-care, but a preschool where your child will grow in their learning through the early stages of life. Our curriculum is one whereby the children learn shapes, colors, and ultimately learn foundational skills to read. The goal of our staff is to shower your children with love while encouraging them to grow in their learned experiences.

In addition to time spent in the classroom, your child will participate in activities such as chapel, music and other physical enrichment programs. I can assure you each day will be one where they will look forward to coming again.

I would be remiss if I didn't extend an invitation to you, the parents, to come and be part of our St. Pete First United Methodist Church family. I find this church to be welcoming, loving and encouraging in those moments when life feels a bit troubled. Worship happens every Sunday morning at 8AM, 930AM and 11AM. From choirs to guitars, our music ministry offers the gamut.

Children and youth are also welcomed here. We are packed with opportunities for both. Whether it be Sunday mornings or evenings, I know your children and youth will feel at home under the leadership and guidance of our staff and screened volunteers. Wednesday evenings we offer a dinner and classes for the whole family. I have found this to be a great time to connect as a family over a meal while also taking time to nurture your spiritual life.

Please let me know how I might be of service to you. If you have any questions, you may reach me by email: bmartin@fumcsp.org or via phone, 727-894-4661 x2121.

Peace and grace,
The Reverend Bob Martin
Senior Pastor

2023-2024 Calendar

St Petersburg First United Methodist Church Preschool

AUGUST 2023

- 2 Last Day—Summer Camp
- 3 Teacher Work Day
- 4 Open House 6 pm
- 7 Preschool 1st Day
- 10 Pre-K 1st Day

SEPTEMBER

- 4 Labor Day Holiday
- 6 Wed Night Live/Kids Choir
Starts 5 pm

OCTOBER

- 9-10 Fall Picture Days
- 16 Teacher Work Day
- 20 Fall Festival/Trunk or
Treat 6-8pm
- 24 Picture Retakes

NOVEMBER

- 10 Veteran's Day Holiday
- 16 Thanksgiving Feast
- 23-24 Thanksgiving Holidays

DECEMBER

- 15 Christmas Pageant 4pm
- 22 Early Release @1 pm
- 25-26 Christmas Holidays
- 29 Early Release @1 pm

JANUARY 2024

- 1 New Year Holiday
- 15 MLK Day Holiday

FEBRUARY

- 19 Teacher Work Day

MARCH

- 28 Spring/Graduation
Picture Day
- 29 Good Friday Holiday

APRIL

- 1 Easter Holiday

MAY

- 24 PreK Graduation 2-4pm
- 27 Memorial Day Holiday
- 29 Last Day of School

JUNE

- 3 First Day of Summer
Camp

JULY

- 4 4th of July Holiday

About Our Preschool

Mission

St Petersburg First United Methodist Church (St Pete FUMC) Preschool's mission is to share the love, joy and peace of Christ with our students and families while providing a safe and nurturing environment where our students will be introduced to education in a fun and stimulating environment.

Curriculum

We use Abeka's Christian preschool curriculum, which meets all standards of the State of Florida for early education.

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

St Pete FUMC Preschool is a Christian faith-based program that integrates faith and Bible stories throughout the day. Children attend Chapel once per week. While specific doctrine is not taught, there is exposure to the Lord every day.

Who We Serve

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

Licensing and Accreditation

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

Our Preschool Council

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

Please contact the preschool director with any concerns or needs that are of a governing or policy nature. Council members are available upon request.

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

Hours of Operation

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

Drop-off and Pick-up

Drop-off is as early as 7:30 am. Please make sure you connect with a teacher who will check-in your child safely.

Pick-up time is no later than 1:00 pm (half day) or 6:00 pm (full day). If your child is picked up late there will be a fee.

Beginning at 1:03 pm (half day) or 6:03 pm (full day) the charge will be a minimum of \$25.00 per event, unless waived by management. You may notify the preschool of late pickup on the Tadpole app or via email.

Holidays/Closures

The school will be closed on the following holidays: Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Holidays (Nov 23-24), Christmas Holidays (Dec 25-26), New Year's Day, MLK Day, Good Friday, the Monday after Easter, Memorial Day, and the 4th of July.

Preschool Facility

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

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

Preschool Staff

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

All staff members are thoroughly screened with a Level II background check. Any personnel working in the preschool area must also complete a Level II background check.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

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

VPK is a school readiness program offered by St Pete FUMC in partnership with the State of Florida. The program is free for the hours between 9 am and 12 pm. 540 VPK instructional hours are offered during the school year.

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

To enroll in the VPK program, you must obtain a VPK certificate at www.elcpinellas.net and bring the voucher to the preschool office to secure your registration.

You may choose to extend the day after VPK is over at noon - see current contract form for cost and details.

If a parent would like their child to attend VPK for a second year, the teacher, parent, and director should all agree that a second year of VPK would be a benefit to the child. The tuition will be at the parent's expense.

Please direct any questions to the office.

Tuition/Fees

An **annual registration fee** is required yearly to secure a seat in our school. Children must start immediately to secure a seat-- we no longer hold reservations. VPK students are not required to pay a registration fee if they are registered only for the 9 am - 12pm schedule.

Tuition is due the 1st of each month, prior to service. You may pay by cash, check (made payable to: First United Methodist Church Preschool), or credit card. Payments should be dropped off at the preschool office.

If your payment is received after the 15th of the month, you will be charged a late fee of \$40.00. A \$25 fee is charged for returned (NSF) checks.

Tuition is based on an annual rate and is spread out over 10 months of payments. Holidays and training days have all been considered when calculating tuition, therefore monthly tuition remains the same each month regardless of number of school days. This includes any days closed due to inclement weather.

If you take vacation during the school year or have sick days, you still must continue to pay to keep your child's spot.

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

Conferences/Assessments

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

Assessments are done three times per year in VPK. These assessments measure school readiness skills.

All other students will have assessments periodically to ensure they are progressing for their age.

If at any time there is a question regarding development, St Pete FUMC Preschool has resources available to help.

Special Needs Children

It is St Pete FUMC Preschool's desire to help all children, but we realize that our program may not be appropriate for all children.

We are able to accommodate some special needs, i.e. food allergies, some physical limitations, some medical limitations, etc.

If there is a concern, please discuss it with the director. A determination will be made whether the school can meet your child's need. A trial period with follow-up may be required.

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

Emergency Plans

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

Illness Policy

You are the best judge of your child's health, and we trust you will not bring a sick child to the center.

If your child is sick, we will call you to come and pick up your child within one hour. Your child will be isolated from the other children until you arrive.

The following criteria will be considered in determining if your child must go home:

- a fever of 101 degrees or more
- inflammation of the eyes (excessive redness, glassy or discharge)
- vomiting
- more than one incidence of diarrhea or loose stool which is not contained within clothing
- communicable disease as defined by the Department of Health Services/Center for Disease Control
- unknown rash
- excessive nasal discharge, especially if yellow or greenish, since this indicates infection
- pain

If your child is sent home due to illness, he/she cannot return to preschool until he has been free from symptoms for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducer. This is to allow your child ample time to recover and stop the spread of illness to the other children and staff.

After your child has been ill, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines when determining whether your child is ready to return to school.

- Mood, appetite, behavior, and activity are again normal
- No fever for 24 hours without a fever reducer
- Antibiotics (if prescribed) have been used for a full 24 hours (48 hours in the case of strep)
- Vomiting, diarrhea cleared for 24 hours
- Frequent coughing, excessive nasal discharge resolved
- Pain (earache, cramps, headache, etc.) resolved

It is your responsibility to notify the school if your child has a communicable disease or infestation such as: measles, mumps, chicken pox, or head lice. A child may be readmitted without a statement from a physician only if the child has been absent for a period of time equal to the longest incubation period of the disease as specified by the Department of Health and Social Services.

The local Health Department will immediately be notified of all communicable diseases and a note will be posted in the parent information center when there has been exposure to a communicable illness in the center.

Please consult with your Director if you need additional information.

Children returned to the center with signs of illness or communicable disease will be refused admittance.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

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

Rules and the Scriptures

1. **Be Kind to Others** (Golden Rule)—Obey your teachers, show self-control, wait to talk, be respectful to everyone.

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

—Matthew 7:12

2. **Take Care of Our School**—Clean up after yourself, take care of the things in the church and school.

"Guard what has been entrusted to your care."

—1 Timothy 6:20

3. **Be Safe**—Walk inside, listen to directions, stay with your class, be aware of your space.

"Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge."

—Psalm 16:1

Guidance Plan

St Pete FUMC Preschool uses many strategies to guide behavior. We want children to understand the intrinsic value of making good choices. In the event negative behavior escalates, we have procedures in place to address it.

Our guidance plan includes modeling desired behavior, careful listening, communicating with respect, and asking that children treat us with respect. When talking to children, we get down to their level, make eye contact, and use short sentences, giving

positive directions in a normal tone of voice. When rules are broken, we use logical consequences and re-do's so that children get a chance to practice the correct behavior.

Corrective Action Policy

St Pete FUMC Preschool takes the responsibility of guiding young children toward positive and appropriate behavior very seriously. Most children respond well to our guidance plan and require little or no follow-up from home. Occasionally, when a child's disobedience and/or aggressive behavior continues, it will become necessary to involve the parent.

The following corrective action outline will be followed to help resolve behavioral problems:

1. A **phone call to parents**. This first call will be made after all other steps in the discipline policy have been taken.
2. A **second phone call to parents** must be **followed up with a director/teacher/parent meeting to discuss a corrective plan**. This may occur with a face-to-face meeting or over the phone within 48 hours unless otherwise approved by the director.

An example of a corrective plan might include an agreement for a specialist from Project Challenge (or another program) to conduct an observation of the problem behavior. Observations are completed to rule out physical or other problems. Once the observation is complete, the specialist will meet with teacher and parents to discuss a tailored plan of action to help correct the behavior. If behavior is not the main issue, other agencies may be contacted for guidance.

3. A **third phone call to parents** will require your child to **go home for the day**. A **plan of action** will then be followed by the parent and teacher, which will include **mandatory parent/director conferences every three weeks** to discuss/monitor the progress of the behavioral problem.

4. **Biting:** Although it is not uncommon for a very young child to occasionally bite, parents will be required to meet with the director after a third bite within a two-week period to discuss a corrective plan of action.
5. **If a child defiantly strikes, bites, or spits at a teacher,** the director may decide to send the child home for the day (or the following day if the incident occurred late in the day).
6. **If there is no improvement** in the child's behavior after repeated attempts of the corrective action plan(s), or the parent refuses to cooperate or participate with St Pete FUMC Preschool, it may become necessary to dis-enroll the child from school. Dis-enrollment is never the desire of St Pete FUMC Preschool and is only done so when all other options have been exhausted.

Open-Door Policy

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

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

—Matthew 19:14