

Parent Handbook
2024~2025

Messiah Preschool



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“Children are a gift of the Lord” Psalm 127:3

Who we are

Welcome to Messiah Preschool, a ministry of Messiah Lutheran Church and part of the Hazel Dell Community since 1976. The preschool is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) and in 2010, earned National Accreditation from the ELEA for the Early Childhood program.

Messiah Preschool provides a Christian community where children feel cared for and safe; a place where children are valued as individuals and where their needs for love, acceptance, growth and affection are supported; and a place where children can prepare a strong foundation in the knowledge and skills needed for continued success in their education and learning process. We will do all we can to provide an atmosphere that is stimulating and will enrich the student. While we strive to fully prepare each child for their future educational journey, it is not our goal to only teach the children a certain number of letter sounds, definitions or facts. It is not about what the children learn, but an attitude toward learning that we are striving to nurture.

An Advisory Board consisting of preschool and church congregation members with backgrounds in education, business and parenting governs the preschool program. The Preschool Advisory Board is responsible for decisions that affect the program and the children and families it serves. A list of current board members is available from the director.

Our hope is that this handbook will help you become familiar with our preschool program and the policies and procedures in place to make the school year a success. We have made provisions for many events and situations in case they ever happen. It is our sincere hope that for many, we will never have to implement. We look forward to working with you and your child.



Our Program

Curriculum

Our curriculum, which has been exclusively developed by our teaching team of professionals, has many influences. As a staff, we have looked to the latest research and information to guide us in the development of this unique and creative curriculum. We use theme-based learning units emphasizing seasonal events through the use of play, music, movement, stories, and arts & craft projects to create a balanced program that addresses academic and social development. As the staff observes the children's individual interests and developmental needs, care is given to ensure those interests are explored through a variety of activities.

We believe that the classroom is the child's workshop. There a child develops skills in making decisions, acquiring knowledge of the world, making friends and learning to cooperate in a group. The child exercises curiosity, initiative and creativity.

Our daily activities include those that are necessary to a child's physical well-being. Some will be teacher-directed, while others are child-initiated. Children learn through their play and learn most quickly when the situation is relative and consistent. By combining what we know about healthy development and the individual needs of the children enrolled in our program, we are able to offer a relevant curriculum which provides ample opportunities for comprehensive and meaningful learning.

Curriculum and activity plans are prepared in advance by our teaching teams and copies are posted on the classroom's Parent Information Board along with any program changes. Each month parents receive a newsletter listing the current topics of our educational program, along with a calendar with topics listed for "Show and Share" and special events.

Chapel: A special time in our week and an important part of our Preschool curriculum. Chapel is conducted with Pastors and staff members of Messiah Lutheran Church. Families are welcome and encouraged to participate as we learn Bible stories and songs that are relevant to today's families. Chapel is typically held during the first 15 minutes of class on a weekly basis. A schedule will be available after the beginning of school.

Scholastic Book Club: Messiah Preschool distributes book club magazines through SCHOLASTIC BOOK CLUBS. Ordering books is optional and is to be done online. Book orders will be delivered to the preschool and distributed to ordering families. Ordering books results in reward points for the preschool to use to order birthday books for the students and enhance its library.

My Big World/Let's Find Out Magazine: The children in the Beginner and Pre-K classes at Messiah Preschool periodically receive a magazine created especially for the preschool child. Although we spend time with these during school hours, we encourage you to have your child "share" the magazine with you at home.

Zaner-Bloser Alphabet: This style of handwriting is similar to what is used by the Vancouver Schools. You will receive a copy of the Zaner-Bloser alphabet. We will be encouraging children to print their names using this alphabet and reminding them to hold their pencils or crayons "correctly" in an efficient tripod grip - illustrated example will be provided.

Routines

Hooks and cubbies: Children are encouraged to remove their own coats/jackets and hang them on their labeled hook. Backpacks can be set in a designated tub. Assistance should be given when a child is unable to help him/herself – by showing how and by reminding them that they can do it, and by encouraging the child to be self-reliant. Teachers will see that all children are appropriately dressed before going outdoors.

Restroom Use: While children at Messiah Preschool are not required to be completely independent in the bathroom, we ask that parents be actively potty-training at home and we will support you in the process at school. Teachers are prepared for bathroom accidents and treat these occurrences matter-of-factly. The child will be changed to dry clothing and the wet articles placed in a plastic bag to take home. In this routine, children are encouraged to help themselves as much as possible. The child is reminded to flush, wash hands and dry them well. There may not be a scheduled restroom period for the children, but all children are required to wash their hands upon entering the classroom, after using the bathroom, before eating and after any "messy" activities.

Toddler Class: staff will change diapers as needed.

Snack time: All children wash their hands prior to snack. Children are encouraged to remain seated until they are through eating. Children are also encouraged to help themselves as much as possible during snack times. Teachers give as little help as possible in opening containers, such as opening string cheese slightly and then allowing the child to pull it open the rest of the way. Children clean up after themselves, placing cups, napkins and trash in the wastebasket.

Circle time: Group times are planned to introduce children to peer experiences and familiarize them with teacher-directed activities. Songs, games, stories and finger-plays, meetings, curriculum or event planning are used to provide pleasant, proactive group interactions, and allow children a time to talk about home experiences, ideas or articles they have brought. All children are encouraged to join group time; however, children who strongly resist or disrupt the group may sit with an adult until circle time is over or until they choose to rejoin the group.

Cleanup: At specified times during the day, children help put away play materials. Many shelves are labeled with photos to help children identify their location. At the last cleanup time, the room should be left in readiness for the next day. Children help bring in equipment after outdoor activities.

Sample of Preschool Daily Schedule

8:45 – 9:00	ARRIVAL: Children wash hands and participate in table activities, such as puzzles, play-dough, lacing beads, drawing/coloring, etc.
9:00 – 9:45	EXPLORATORY PLAY: Children work through centers of science & discovery, drama, blocks & building, reading/listening, art & writing, home life, sensory, painting, chapel, math, games & puzzles.
9:45 – 9:50	CLEAN-UP: Children put away toys and materials, use the bathroom and get ready for circle time.
9:50 – 10:10	CIRCLE TIME: Teacher brings group together for songs, discussion of the day's activities, calendar and choosing classroom jobs.
10:10 – 10:35	SNACK & TIME: Children wash hands and enjoy snack together followed by individual or group time with books from class library.
10:35 – 11:05	OUTDOOR/GYM: Children select from a variety of activities and interest areas on outdoor playgrounds or in the gym.
11:05 – 11:30	ART/PROJECT: Children create a project based on day's lesson.
11:30 – 11:40	SHARING: Children share items from home according to theme.
11:40 – 11:45	CLOSING: Review day, sing good-bye song and dismissal

Daily schedules for each classroom will be posted on their Parent Information Board.

Toddler class is 9:15-11:30 a.m. and consists of exploratory play, time in the gym or on the playground, snack, group activities and a modified circle time.

Outdoor Environment

Outdoor activities are an important part of the child's development and the program's curriculum. Outdoor play provides opportunities for loud and active play that is unsuitable for indoor play. Outdoor time is a time for free play as well as special organized outdoor activities.

- All children go outdoors during the specified time. If a child is considered too ill to participate outdoors, it is recommended that the child remain at home until able to fully participate at school.

- During the rainy season, children should come prepared wearing a jacket with a hood.
- All climbing equipment is closely supervised by our teaching staff.
- Sand stays in the sand area. A child throwing sand is cautioned about the dangers of sand in eyes; if it continues, they are removed from the area and allowed to choose something else to do until ready to use the sand area appropriately.
- Children stay in their own outdoor activity area unless on a supervised walk.
- Teachers supervising the outdoor environment keep their eyes on the children at all times, even while engaged in necessary brief conversations with other adults. Teachers will move into areas where children are gathering to observe and will be ready to step in if necessary.

Indoor Environment

Children may select from among the various interest/learning centers during exploratory play. Materials and supplies are available for children to use in expressing creativity; classroom teachers also have special projects and learning activities planned for the children. Children are encouraged to solve problems using their words, with a teacher present to guide the problem-solving process and prevent episodes of physical aggression.

- Children are reminded to use "walking feet" and that running is for outdoors or in the gym.
- Children are reminded to use kind words and their "inside voice" and save loud voices for outdoors.
- Materials and equipment are kept in the areas in which they are stored. The classroom environment is arranged into areas with quiet activities separated from more active areas so children needing to concentrate are able to do so.
- Children are to remain in the classroom at all times, unless the Director approves a supervised excursion, such as field trips or nature walks. Sometimes a child may accompany a staff member on a quick errand, such as to help carry gym equipment, or to check on a cooking project in the kitchen. The lead teacher must always be notified that the child is leaving the room for a quick errand, and children must be properly supervised at all times.

Learning Centers

Painting: Children are encouraged to wear aprons/smocks to paint. Teaching staff provide assistance when needed with holding and using paintbrushes. Teachers show interest, but do not suggest subjects or ask “What is it?” Creativity and written descriptions of paintings are encouraged.

Dough: Play dough is used with cookie cutters, rolling pins, and play dough scissors. Teachers guide and encourage children in using materials, but do not make things for them.

Art Materials: Children are given opportunities daily to explore and experiment with many different art materials and mediums in the art area. Teachers are on hand to help the children learn how to use various tools and materials, but do not make things for children. Assistance is provided for young children who may need help in learning to use scissors or guidance with glue.

Dramatic Play: Dramatic play materials and props are provided in each classroom and we encourage children to participate in a variety of dramatic play activities. Children are encouraged to keep the area neat, picking up when they are through.

Library: Teachers model for children how to appropriately use and care for books, how to turn pages without tearing, and return books to shelves when finished. Teachers are available to read to children whenever they wish to read, hear or engage with a story.

Music: Music is encouraged throughout the day through the use singing, dancing and the use of rhythm instruments.

Sensory Table: Water and other materials are introduced frequently as sensory play is an activity that many children enjoy. There are numerous water/sand toys and objects for measuring and pouring.

Manipulative Materials: Manipulative materials – puzzles, beads, magnets, small blocks, games, etc. – are always available to children during exploratory play. Children remove the materials they wish from shelves and use them at the tables.

Block area: Teachers provide constant supervision to see that the constructions are kept at a safe height – below the child’s shoulder level. Adults show the children where and how to build, not what to build.

Classroom Enrichment

While enrolled at Messiah Preschool, your child will have many opportunities to explore the world in which they live. As part of our program, your child will be introduced to the various cultures that are a part of the children's preschool family. There may be visits throughout the year from special guests from our community, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, dentists, and maybe even a parent or two for the purpose of broadening the scope of your child's world and enhancing your child's classroom experience.

Health & Safety

Messiah Preschool was Nationally Accredited by the ELEA (Evangelical Lutheran Education Association) in 2010. In Washington, private preschools are not required to be licensed by the state; however, we strive to maintain many of the state standards of cleanliness for a healthy environment.

The staff makes every effort to maintain a safe and healthy environment for the children so that a minimum of absences occur due to illness. Health habits taught at home are reinforced at the center, including frequent hand washing, especially before meals and after restroom use, proper use of tissues for wiping noses, wearing appropriate clothing for weather conditions and rotating active and quiet activities with opportunities for the children to rest.

All of our staff members are required to undergo background checks every two years and hold current CPR/First Aid/Bloodborne Pathogens certifications, Food Handlers Card and undergo regular training to maintain the health and safety standards of our program. All staff members are further required to obtain TB clearance, have a background in working with young children, as well as complete 10 hours of continuing education each year in the field of early childhood education.

Snacks and Food Safety

Messiah Preschool is a **NUT-SAFE ZONE**. This includes items manufactured in a plant that also processes nuts. Please read labels carefully. **To further protect students with food allergies, all student snacks brought into the classroom, with the exception of fruit and vegetables, must be commercially packaged or prepared by teachers or students in our center.** We encourage parents to donate wholesome snack foods once a month to be shared with the class.

We strive to provide a simple and nutritious snack to the children enrolled in our program. Healthy snacks may consist of the following items: milk or milk products; fruit and/or vegetables; 100% real fruit juice or water; whole grain or enriched breads and/or cereal products.

In an effort to help reduce the incident of choking during snack time, please adhere to the following snack guidelines for the various classes.

All Classes:

- Popcorn will not be served
- Grapes must be cut in halves (fourths if large)

Tots (2's) and Beginners (3's) Classes:

- Since children don't master chewing that requires a grinding motion until the age of four, all hard fruits and raw vegetables should be cut into bite-size pieces (no larger than ½ inch). This must be done in the preschool's nut-safe kitchen.

Articles referenced related to choking hazards for young children:

www.healthychildren.org

<http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/feeding-infants-toddlers/chokable-foods>

http://blogs.babycenter.com/mom_stories/5-common-choking-hazards-in-children/

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/choking.pdf> (see "choking prevention tips" page)

Please remember to keep the staff informed of any restrictions or modifications to your child's diet. We must obtain from the parent or health care provider a written list of foods that your child cannot consume due to allergies, personal health requirements or religious restrictions.

If your child has food allergies, other than to nuts, you may be asked to provide your child's daily snacks. You may choose to bring them daily or send a supply to be stored within the classroom.

Illness

The staff appreciates the fact that many family members who enroll their children at the center are working and that it is difficult to have their schedules interrupted. However, your cooperation is needed in stopping the spread of contagious illnesses. **Children who have the following symptoms cannot be admitted to the school until the contagious period has passed and for at least 24, preferably 48, hours after the symptoms have subsided.** We cannot serve children with:

- Temperatures 100 degrees or above
- Severe cough
- Sore throat
- Vomiting
- Green/yellow thick discharge from the nose/eyes
- Diarrhea
- Watery eyes
- Swollen glands

- A skin rash that has not been identified by a physician
- A communicable disease
- Evidence of head lice or other parasites
- Severe headache, toothache or ear pain
- Stiff neck or headache with fever
- Skin infections
- Abdominal pain with low-grade fever
- Eyes that are painful, red and matted

If a child is found to be ill or becomes sick while at school, the parent/legal guardian or emergency contact will be notified. The child will be isolated, if possible, and the parent/legal guardian will be expected to pick the child up immediately.

If there is an outbreak of a contagious disease such as chicken pox, this information will be posted on the classroom door with handouts giving information on the disease so that parents may take appropriate action to protect their children.

At Messiah Preschool, we understand the importance of maintaining consistency in your child's classroom. Each classroom will have a lead teacher and an assistant teacher. If illnesses or personal reasons leave this position open, we will ensure a qualified substitute teacher or assistant is called in.

Medications

Messiah Preschool staff members are not authorized to give any child medication. Children are not allowed to keep medicine in their pockets, backpacks or cubbies.

Children with contagious illnesses must have been on medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

Medications for chronic conditions such as asthma or allergies:

For chronic conditions (such as asthma), the parent's written consent and Emergency Medical Directive must be on file. An individual care plan must be provided that lists symptoms or conditions under which the medication will be given. If your child suffers from chronic asthma and uses an inhaler, you may be asked to provide the classroom teacher with an inhaler to keep in the classroom.

Children with anaphylactic allergies must provide the preschool with an unexpired epi-pen that remains on-site for the duration of the school year.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a life-threatening emergency, one staff member will stay with the injured/ill child. 911 will be called for any major medical emergency that could be life-threatening or extremely dangerous. Severely injured children will not be moved before the ambulance crew arrives unless we are otherwise instructed by a 911 operator. For a child who is choking, staff trained in using current choking/upward thrust maneuvers will work to dislodge the object.

Parents will be contacted as soon as possible. If the parents cannot be reached, we will make every effort to contact one of the emergency contacts listed on the child's registration form.

In the event of minor emergencies, staff trained in first aid will take appropriate steps to aid the child. We always have at least one staff member trained in first aid and infant/child CPR in the classroom. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible if the accident might possibly require medical care.

When accidents and minor injuries occur that are unlikely to require further medical attention (such as minor cuts, scrapes, bruises), parents are not called but will be informed of the incident when they arrive to pick up the child and be given a Childcare Injury/Incident Report.

All injuries (both minor and major) and symptoms of illness are recorded in the Illness and Injury Log.

Child Abuse Reporting Requirements

Our staff is mandated by Washington State Law and licensing requirements to immediately report any instance when there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect or exploitation to the police or Child Protective Services. We may not notify parents when law enforcement or Child Protective Services are called about possible child abuse, neglect or exploitation, except on the recommendation of Child Protective Services or law enforcement when they are called.

Hand Washing Policy

All children, staff and parent volunteers must wash their hands:

- Upon Arriving
- After toileting
- After helping children with toileting
- After diapering a child
- After helping a child with nose blowing, coughing or any sign of illness
- Before handling any food service
- Between activities (e.g. wash before and after using play dough)

Children will be supervised as often as possible to promote proper hand washing procedures and will be taught proper hand washing techniques.

Sanitation Policy

Tables, sinks, countertops, and toilets are sanitized as needed during the day. Toys and shelves are cleaned on a regular basis and as needed. Mouthed toys are immediately set aside to be sanitized before being returned to shelves. A janitorial crew cleans the entire facility nightly.

Dress Code

Dress for mess! Comfortable, layered play clothes and solid, sturdy shoes are best at preschool. Your child should be able to manage all clothing when using the bathroom and dressing for outdoor play. No sandals without heel straps, flip-flops, clogs or slippers. Modesty is important--girls should wear tights or shorts under dresses.

Pet Policy

Messiah Preschool is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all students and staff. For this reason, family pets are not allowed on the premises. All animals on the church property must be properly restrained.

Safety & Visitors

We ask that families closely supervise their children in the parking lot, lobbies and elsewhere in the preschool. No child is ever to be left alone or unsupervised. **At arrival, families are expected to stay with the child until the classroom doors open.**

Families whose children are enrolled in the program are permitted access to all parts of the center where their child is cared for. Families with children in the program are encouraged to visit their children's classroom. Before entering any of the classrooms during such a visit, please pre-arrange the visit with staff and make sure you have **passed Messiah's background check process. All visitors must first check in at the preschool office, sign the visitor's log and obtain a badge.**

The adult-to-child ratios below are set by Washington State licensing requirements and are the minimum allowed by law:

Toddlers/Twos: 1:7 (maximum group size of 14)

Three-to-Five: 1:10 (maximum group size of 20)

However, our ratios are usually better and closer to the standard of best practices established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) which are:

Toddlers/Two 1:5 (maximum group size of 10)

Beginners/Threes 1:6 (maximum group size of 12)

Pre-K/Fours 1:7 (maximum group size of 14)

This is due to the nature of our program and learning environment.

Hot drinks taken into the classrooms must be in containers with secure lids and placed out of the reach of the children. No foods may be taken into classrooms, except for snacks for the group.

Use of tobacco products can take place ONLY outside and away from the building where children cannot see its use. Tobacco use is never allowed when children are present – on the play space, on walks, on field trips, or in the classrooms. Alcohol, weapons (except for law enforcement), and drugs are not allowed on school grounds. Any adult coming into the preschool under the influence of any drug will be asked to leave.

Discipline and Guidance

Discipline and Guidance Policy

Our program subscribes to a disciplinary policy built on mutual trust, with teachers and children working together to help the children grow and mature. Teachers value and respect the children; children trust their teachers' patience, understanding and friendly firmness in guiding behavior.

In helping to direct the child toward self-discipline, the following guidance techniques are used:

1. Positive statements are used in giving direction to behavior.
2. Redirection is consistent with the child's needs.
3. The child is given opportunities to make choices and solve problems.
4. Suggestions are given in time to prevent conflicts.
5. Comparisons of children are avoided.
6. Unacceptable behavior is clearly explained and the child is told what is acceptable. Approval of acceptable behavior is clearly expressed.

Discipline of children shall primarily be the responsibility of the teacher and classroom assistant in accordance with the individual child's age, stage of development and the knowledge that the teacher has of the child's needs. We view guidance as a team effort and an ongoing learning process.

Disciplinary methods used shall be based on guidance to help the child develop inner control, self-responsibility, and respect for the rights of others, as he learns to cope with the daily experiences of living and working with others.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CORPORAL PUNISHMENT BE USED OR TOLERATED BY ANYONE, INCLUDING PARENTS, ON SCHOOL GROUNDS. THIS INCLUDES BITING,

SHAKING, SLAPPING, HITTING, KICKING OR ANY OTHER MEANS OF INFLICTING PAIN.

Verbal abuse is not allowed. This means no yelling, no obscene language and no put-downs between adults or between adults and children. Spanking, threatening, or withholding food is not to be used to discipline children while on school grounds.

The staff shall accept and respect each child for who he/she is as a unique individual. If a child's behavior becomes unacceptable, this shall be explained to the child in a positive way without humiliation, fright, or physical harm. The child shall then be helped to find a better way of resolving problems or meeting his/her needs. Respect for the child's feelings shall be maintained. If the teaching staff feels that parent involvement is necessary, the parents will be contacted and a meeting will be set up to discuss further options.

Rules and Guidelines

Necessary rules shall be few, clearly and simply stated, and consistently maintained to assure the health and safety of the children at all times. Our rules are: *Be Safe, Be Kind and Be Neat*. For example, rules such as "children riding toys with wheels must wear a helmet to be safe" would always be enforced. Guidelines are more flexible and open to interpretation by individual teachers and can vary with the developmental level of the children. For example, some teachers require that housekeeping materials be kept in a dramatic play area, while others allow them to be used in other areas. It is easy to see how the ability of the children to return play materials to their proper place when finished with them would influence such a guideline.

Program Policies and Procedures

Admissions and Enrollment Policy

Messiah Preschool serves children 2 years to 5 years of age. We provide quality education for children in an age-appropriate environment.

Messiah Preschool gladly welcomes and accepts children and families from all backgrounds, regardless of race, color, national and ethnic origin, religion or gender. The rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded are made available to all students of the school.

For admission to the preschool program:

- Opening available
- Age requirement met
- Toilet training requirement met
- Tuition/Registration fee paid

Upon enrollment it will be necessary for the following forms to be completed, signed and returned to the preschool office before your child's first day:

- Complete Registration Packet including:
 - Registration Form
 - General Permission Form
 - Medical Authorization Form
 - Immunization Record

To ensure proper adjustment for all children, each child will be admitted to the program for a trial period of up to two weeks. At the conclusion of this time, parent and Preschool Director will decide if the program is suitable for your child.

A child's enrollment may be terminated at any time by joint decision of the Program Director and Lead Teacher for the child's classroom. Should the need arise for a child's enrollment to be terminated, we will give the parent two weeks' notice, if possible, so that other care may be found for the child. Reasons for termination/withdrawal include:

- The program does not meet the needs of the child and/or the child's family (because of schedule, tuition or philosophical differences)
- Tuition payments have not been submitted and no arrangements for payment by the family have been made
- The family fails to cooperate with the staff in operation and management of the program (e.g. consistently fails to pick up child on time, sends ill child to school, etc.).

Messiah Preschool reserves the right to request a child's withdrawal from the program if his/her behavior is consistently disruptive in such a manner that it is harmful to the well-being of other children and staff.

Late Pick-up Policy

Classes end at various times depending upon the class: 11:30 a.m. (Tots) or 11:45 a.m. All children must be picked up at this time. In the event that a child remains at the center past end time, a teacher or the director will stay with the child and follow the following procedures:

- Every effort will be made to contact the child's parents to come pick the child up.
- If a parent cannot be reached, one of the emergency contacts will be called. Current photo identification will be required by this person in order for us to release your child to them. Parent/legal guardian will be notified as soon as possible that the child has been released to one of their emergency contact persons if they arrive and find the school to be closed.
- Late fees will be billed at a rate of \$25.00 for the first 10 minutes, and \$1.00 per minute thereafter**.
- If the teacher has not been able to contact anyone by 2:00 p.m. to come for the child, the child will be considered abandoned and law enforcement will be called**.

**Please note: We have to make these provisions in the event that this situation ever develops. Our sincere hope is that we never have to implement this procedure. Working together as a partner in your child's care will make your experience with Messiah Preschool a pleasant one. Please try to notify us of any situation or emergency that occurs that may prevent you from picking up your child on time. We are happy to work with our families.

Billing Policies

Messiah Preschool is on a monthly tuition schedule. Payment is due the 1st of each month. After a five-day grace period, a late penalty fee of \$10.00 will be assessed on the 6th of each month to all accounts not brought current. If payment is not received by the 15th of the month, the child may not continue in the program until the account is brought current. You are welcome to pay your child's tuition in advance.

We encourage payment be made online through brightwheel via bank account, credit or debit card. Payments may also be made by check, money order, or cash (cash payments require getting a receipt from the Preschool Director). In the event of an NSF check, there will be a \$35.00 NSF charge. More than two NSF checks in a year will result in cash, money order or certified check acceptance only.

We reserve the right to re-evaluate our rates at any time. In the event that our tuition rates change, we will provide one month's notification.

If there is a billing problem or error, please contact the preschool director to resolve the matter.

Vacation billing and sick days: Messiah Preschool does not credit accounts or issue discounts for vacation time or sick days.

Siblings and Church Members: There is a 5% tuition discount for Messiah Lutheran Church members enrolled in our program as well as on each child's tuition for siblings attending Messiah Preschool at the same time. Discounts may not be combined.

Tuition Assistance: You may obtain an application from the Director. All information is confidential. The Preschool Board and Director review and determine eligibility. Funding is granted based on availability of funds and need.

Daily Communication

It is our hope that daily communication will occur between parents and staff. We recognize that time constraints can often make this difficult and we hope to provide options that will accommodate each family's schedule. Our toddler teaching staff will provide verbal communication each day to parents indicating the details of daily routine as well as any significant incidents that may occur during the day. The teaching staff of the older children will make every attempt to speak with parents at drop-off or pick-up times. If this is not possible or appropriate at the time, teachers may communicate about a child's daily activities via email. Any and all occurrences of injury or illness will be reported to parents verbally and by way of an Injury/Incident Report.

Additionally, parents are always welcome to schedule a parent-teacher conference to discuss any questions or concerns.

Disaster Plan

Preparedness

Messiah Preschool is prepared to care for your child in times of critical situations. Please make sure *authorized release forms* are up to date and correct, and you have purchased your student's *Emergency Kit*. In the event of an emergency that leaves our school safe and intact, parents will be called as soon as possible and children will be dismissed to authorized persons.

The staff conducts monthly safety drills with the children. Though we have never experienced a major disaster, we want to take precautions should an emergency

state occur while your child or children are in our care. The most likely disasters identified for our site include: fire, earthquake, windstorms and winter storms.

In the event of a disaster requiring children and staff to remain at the facility, the Emergency Kits will have a 72-hour supply of food and water for children and staff.

Fire

In the event of a fire, building alarms will sound and the emergency lights will come on. Staff will enact rehearsed evacuation procedures with the children.

Evacuation Process

In the event of fire or natural disaster that require us to evacuate the premises, we will evacuate to the church gym. Each teacher will be responsible to account for every child on their class' attendance roster. Staff will stay with evacuated children continuously until such a time as the children are in the care of their families or other guardians. Parents will be notified as soon as children are safe and comfortable. Teachers will be responsible for their class' Emergency Kits and emergency backpack.

Power Outage

In the event of a power outage, we will follow the Vancouver School District's course of action. If power outages occur while school is in session, the following will occur:

- After 30 minutes Toddler's parents will be called for dismissal
- After one hour the rest of the children's parents will be called for dismissal

Inclement Weather

Messiah Preschool will be closed when weather conditions force the closure of the Vancouver School District. Listen to local radio and television stations for announcements of closures. Our first concern is the safety of staff and students. When schools are delayed in the A.M. we will cancel A.M. Preschool classes and do our best to open our school at the earliest possible time. Snow days may be made up at the discretion of the Preschool Board. If the Board determines that snow days will be made up, these days will be added to the end of the school year.

Lockdown

In the event of an emergency lockdown, staff will gather children safely in their classrooms and lock doors and close the window blinds until clearance is given by the Director.

Out of Town Contact

If a disaster does occur, parents will be notified by phone as soon as possible. Parents may call the school at (360) 574-2686. If the emergency disrupts local phone lines, Messiah Preschool has designated Alyson Schumacher as the out-of-

state phone contact in case of an emergency that disrupts phone lines. Her cell phone number is 910-545-7026.

Holidays and Celebrations

Messiah Preschool celebrates all relevant cultural and Christian holidays with the children in our program. If you prefer your child not celebrate one of these holidays in class, please inform your child's teacher so that other arrangements may be made.

Messiah follows most of the holidays observed by the Vancouver Public Schools. A calendar of such dates is distributed at the beginning of the school year. Any changes to this calendar will be made at the discretion of the Preschool Board.

Birthdays will be celebrated in each class in a variety of ways. However, due to allergy concerns and not wanting children to be left out, we will not be celebrating birthdays with food items.

Hours of Operation

Regular office hours are 8:15 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. We are closed weekends.

Class times are: A.M.--8:45–11:45 a.m. Toddler Co-Op class is 9:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Attendance: Regular attendance is important for children to receive the maximum benefit from the program. In order for teachers to effectively plan for the day and to be aware of scheduling needs for each individual child, we request families to notify the school when the child will be absent, arriving late or leaving early.

Personal Items

It is recommended that each child have a complete change of clothing in their bag/backpack in the event their clothing becomes wet or soiled. Please clearly label all coats, boots, and extra clothing with your child's name.

Because we are concerned about the loss or damage of children's belongings, we ask that parents help enforce the rule that toys from home are not allowed in the classroom. Items brought for sharing will not be brought out and played with so they are not damaged at school.

Signing In and Out

The state requires all parents to sign their child in and out with the time and their full legal signature each time their child attends the school. This is extremely important as this list is used to check attendance during emergency drills or events. Children are not permitted to sign themselves in and out. Our sign-in/out record is always located on a clipboard outside the classroom. Children are released only to persons of 16 years of age or older and for whom the staff has written permission from the parent/legal guardian. Families should be sure to update this permission when they wish a new person to pick up their child, as the child will not be released unless written permission has been granted. Teachers/staff will request current picture identification from anyone not known to them seeking to pick up your child, so please advise your designated pick-up person to bring current photo identification.

Non-Custodial Parent: A copy of the court restraining order must be on file to keep a non-custodial parent from picking up a student. Without it, Messiah Preschool cannot legally stop pick-up.

If an individual picking up a child appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, 911 will be called immediately.

Transportation

Field Trips

Children in supervised groups may participate in age-appropriate field trips (e.g. pumpkin patch, fire station) only if the parent has given written permission. Families will be informed about each field trip (including destination, purpose of trip, method of transportation, additional fees, etc.) at least a week before the trip. Children must be transported by the child's legal guardian. Safety is of the utmost importance to our staff and we will ensure that all safety precautions are in effect when field trips are taken.

Employees cannot transport children to "driving" field trips. If you are unable to attend, you may give written authorization to another adult to transport your child to/from event.

Visitors and Volunteers

Parents or other family members are always welcome to help out and volunteer in our program. All classroom volunteers must complete and pass a background check. All visitors and volunteers are expected to uphold our program's health and safety standards at all times.

While we appreciate our parent's contribution to our school, volunteer time cannot be exchanged for tuition.

Families are encouraged to attend the designated family celebrations throughout the year, such as the Harvest Open House, Christmas Program, Spring Fling, and any other class-specific family celebration. Details of such activities will be sent home on class calendars.