



First Lutheran Preschool
Family Handbook

2023-24

Welcome to First Lutheran Preschool

Registered with the
 Maryland State Department of Education
 as a Preschool of a tax-exempt religious
 organization.
 LC#153370

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Contact Information

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 WWW.FIRSTLUTHERANPRESCHOOLEC.COM
 FIRST LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL IS LOCATED IN THE
 EDUCATION BUILDING OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
 3604 CHATHAM ROAD, ELLICOTT CITY, MD 21042.

Our Mission

The Mission of First Lutheran Preschool is to serve God by serving God’s children in a Christian environment that is safe, welcoming, and rich with opportunities to develop the spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual gifts of every child placed in our care.

Our Purpose & Philosophy

Our purpose is to provide a quality early childhood educational program with a Christian emphasis. We are an outreach ministry of First Lutheran Church. First Lutheran Preschool’s philosophy is rooted in child-centered play where children learn socialization, communication, and critical thinking skills. We celebrate natural curiosity within the framework of a nurturing classroom (both indoors and outdoors). We recognize that children have their own gifts and learn in a variety of ways. Our goal is to help each child gain confidence in his/her own abilities and develop a life-long love of learning. We welcome people of all abilities by working with the community of parents, health care workers, and caregivers to provide a united delivery of services. We respect all cultural and faith backgrounds and encourage families to share their own cultural identities and languages with us so that we can incorporate that knowledge into our program.

Non-Discrimination Policy

First Lutheran Preschool admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or individual differences or needs in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship or any other school administered programs. First Lutheran Preschool builds partnerships with families and the community through collaboration with First Lutheran Church.

First Lutheran Church

First Lutheran Church’s mission is to be welcoming, growing, and sharing in God’s grace. The congregation carries its faith out into the community and world in a variety of ways. First Lutheran also reaches out through our membership in and support of DE/MD Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

First Lutheran Preschool is an outreach ministry of First Lutheran Church. The Preschool opened its doors in 2008 and has been a blessing to the community and congregation alike. Our history demonstrates our commitment to the tasks God has set before us in this place and our willingness to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ into the world.

If you wish to speak with one of our pastors, please contact the church office at 410-465-2977.

Administration and Staffing

Our staff is faithful, caring, and qualified. The director, teachers and assistants participate in in-service training to stay current in the field of early childhood practices. The Preschool Board determines policy and procedure, and Preschool Treasurer oversees all financial affairs.

First Lutheran Preschool does not endorse staff members providing child care for Preschool families outside of work hours. Should a parent and teacher choose to enter such a relationship, the parent and the staff member must sign a liability waiver.

Admission/Enrollment Policy

First Lutheran Preschool accepts applications in the following order: Church members and families currently enrolled in the school beginning in January. Open enrollment begins on the Tuesday after the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

Ages & Stages Screening

First Lutheran Preschool will provide parents with the screening tool, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, within the first 45 days of a child starting in preschool. This tool is designed to highlight a child's strengths and developmental milestones and will be reviewed with parents during fall conferences.

Arrival and Dismissal

Entrance into the Campus:

Parents/caregivers must enter the campus from the Frederick Road entrance and follow the signs to the designated drop-off zone for their child's class.

Using the *brighwheel* app on their phones, parents/caregivers will scan the bar code and complete the brief health inventory. The child exits the vehicle with the help of the teacher. Extreme caution should be used during drop off and dismissal. **Vehicles should be placed in park during QR Code scanning to prevent accidents.**

Pick-Up Procedures and Stranger Identification:

It is extremely important to release a child only to an authorized adult. Parent/caregivers are required to alert First Lutheran Preschool in writing if someone other than the enrolling parent/guardian will pick up the child. We may request a form of identification when someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up the child. **VERBAL CONSENT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE AUTHORIZATION AND DOES NOT COMPLY WITH SCHOOL POLICY.**

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are a special time for all. For each birthday boy or girl, teachers will provide a birthday crown and the choice of a small toy from the prize box. Invitations to birthday parties and play dates may be distributed at school **only** if the entire classroom has been invited. Celebration of summer birthdays should be coordinated with your child's teacher. No birthday cakes/candy/cookies, etc. are permitted at school.

Chapel

Chapel takes place in First Lutheran's sanctuary and occurs every Wednesday. During this brief but meaningful time, children will be introduced to Bible stories, songs, and prayer by one of First Lutheran's pastors or staff members.

Class Lists

Class lists will be distributed during the first month of

school to use for social purposes or for arranging carpools. The lists are not for soliciting or for conducting preschool business. All preschool business correspondence should go through the office of the Preschool Director.

Class Size

Our maximum class size is sixteen children. Each class is staffed with a teacher and a teacher's assistant.

Classroom Materials

Classrooms are equipped with developmentally appropriate materials to enhance learning. With thoughtful consideration, teachers make intentional choices about which materials to use that will best meet the learning objectives. Children in all classrooms have access to materials for sensory, language, science, technology, math, engineering, and arts exploration. The materials are reflective of children's natural curiosity and support challenging play for all abilities.

Clothing

We request that all children bring a complete set of extra clothing including pants, shirt, socks, and underwear. All clothing should be clearly marked with your child's name in a zip-lock plastic bag. Children should come dressed in comfortable clothing that allows for easy bathroom use. It is recommended that children wear tennis shoes to school, as we will be playing outside on the playground. Sandals and clogs are not recommended. Coats, hats, and mittens must be worn when the weather turns cold, as we will continue to use the playground and outdoor classroom.

Communication

First Lutheran Preschool sends group or personal messages through *brightwheel*. Occasionally, e-mail newsletters are sent through Constant Contact. Please make sure you are receiving our e-mails, as sometimes they will be in your spam or promotions folder.

Our website for general information is www.firstlutheranpreschoolec.com and our Facebook page is www.facebook.com/FirstLutheranEllicottCity/ You may check our **online calendar** for dates of activities at <https://www.firstlutheranpreschoolec.com/calendar>.

Discharge Policy

First Lutheran Preschool reserves the right to drop or terminate service after consultations with parents/guardians, when the welfare of the child or group would make this advisable. Reasons for termination may include but not be limited to: Lack of parental cooperation; Non-payment of fees; Inability of the child to adjust to the school; Habitual late pick up; or Inability to meet the needs of the child without hiring additional staff.

Discipline/Positive Behavior Policy

At First Lutheran Preschool, we achieve discipline in the classroom through an orderly environment that provides clear boundaries and interesting activities. Discipline is an integral part of our curriculum. Teachers model caring behavior and help children build positive relationships with each other. Teachers also help children learn language skills so that they can express their feelings appropriately.

Effective Guidance Techniques applied to all children include:

- Reinforcement of appropriate behavior- smiles, eye contact, verbal praise
- Modeling of appropriate behavior techniques
- Redirection of child to another activity
- Teaching the child to solve his or her own problems and to deal with frustration
- Time-outs may be used as a "last resort" if a child is causing harm to other children or him/herself. The child will be placed where they can be observed and heard by the teacher. Upon the conclusion of the time out, with the help of the teacher, the child will actively participate in problem solving, discovering more appropriate ways to react to conflict. The duration of the time-out will never exceed one minute for each year of age.

Spanking or any type of physical punishment is not permitted at First Lutheran Preschool. In the unlikely event that a child's negative behavior becomes chronic, parents will be asked to meet with the teacher for a conference to help the child more effectively.

Enrollment

Registration

The following steps are necessary to complete the enrollment of your child at First Lutheran Preschool. Spaces in the school will be filled on completion of the following:

- Registration through *brightwheel*

- Signed Tuition agreement
- Deposit and Registration Fee

When the director receives your enrollment application and fees, you will receive the rest of the required forms:

- Emergency Form;
- Health Inventory and MD Department of Health Hygiene Immunization Certificate to be completed by a health practitioner.
- Picture Release; and
- All About My Child Information Sheet.

Registration Fee

The annual non-refundable registration fee is \$160 per family.

Discounts

A 10% discount off the monthly tuition fee is available to First Lutheran church members. To be eligible for the member discount, at least one parent must be a contributing member of First Lutheran Church. Church members are not eligible for other discounts.

A 5% discount is given to those who pay the year's tuition in full before September 1.

A 10% sibling discount is given off the second child's tuition fee.

Extended Absence

Tuition fees are due on the fifth of each month. No exceptions are given, even in the case of family travel. If parents do not wish to pay the tuition during an extended absence, they must give written notice (at least 45 days prior to the absence) to the director that they are withdrawing their child from the school with the understanding that their child's space may be filled by another incoming student. An additional registration fee will be charged if the parent chooses to re-enroll their child in the program after the extended absence (if there is space available). No refunds are given in case of withdrawal, unless the school year has been paid in full, in which case the school will refund the tuition paid except for the non-refundable deposit.

Payments

Tuition fees are due on the fifth of each month.

Families must sign up for the Auto-pay method through *brightwheel*. Tuition is automatically withdrawn on the 5th of the month, September through April. Payments after the 5th of the month will be assessed with a \$10 late fee. A \$25 bank fee will apply for insufficient funds. Those that choose not to enroll in Autopay, will need to pay for the year

in full due September 1.

Late Pick-up Fees

It is important that a child is picked up from school on time, at least within the first ten minutes after dismissal. The late fee is \$10 per every ten minutes. For instance, if you pick up your child eleven minutes after dismissal, you will be charged a \$10 late fee. Late payments will be invoiced through *brightwheel*.

Field Trips

Periodically throughout the year, each preschool class will have the opportunity to go on a field trip. The field trips will always be related to the curriculum and will provide a concrete learning experience for the students. The school provides admission fees for students. Admission fees for parents and siblings are paid by the family. We do not have bus transportation and ask that every student has a parent/chaperone attend each field trip.

Grievance Policy

If a parent/guardian should experience a grievance, the following procedure should be followed:

Grievances should be brought directly and confidentially to the director. The director will address and deal with the grievance at the earliest possible time. If the grievance is not resolved to every person's satisfaction, the grievance will be brought to the Preschool Board for consultation.

Health & Safety

Signs of Illness

Your child should remain home when sick.

Symptoms include

- Fever (100.4F) or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath
- Sore throat, nasal congestion, runny nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting
- Diarrhea

If your child has any one of these symptoms, they should isolate at home **for at least 48 hours after onset of symptoms**, or at least 5 days if they test positive for COVID-19..

Your child can return to school when they have a negative COVID-19 test or a note from the doctor *and* their symptoms have improved.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19 or has been

exposed to someone with COVID-19, contact the preschool immediately.

The preschool will contact the parents/caregivers if a child exhibits symptoms while at school. We expect parents/caregivers to pick up a sick child as soon as possible.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

Teachers and assistants will clean toys depending on use. All surfaces will be cleaned after use and/or before snack or meals. Classrooms are cleaned by a professional cleaning service nightly.

Washing Hands

Children and teachers will wash hands before entering the classroom, after using the bathroom, before eating, and any other time the teacher deems necessary. Using water and soap is the preferred method of cleaning.

Lunch

Children bring their lunch to school and eat and socialize with their friends. We do not allow nuts or foods containing nuts (peanut butter). We encourage families to pack a healthy, balanced meal. For ideas, go to <https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/preschoolers>. The preschool will notify parents/guardians if the child does not have a healthy balanced lunch and will request that the lunch be replaced or supplemented with healthy food. The preschool will make available 1% low fat milk at lunch time.

Snacks and Food Allergies

First Lutheran Preschool strives to provide a healthy environment for all children. Parents must provide specific information to the teacher about their child's allergy. First Lutheran Preschool is a nut free school, which means that food products containing nuts will not be served. Snacks are provided by the preschool. Our snack menu consists of fresh fruit (apple, orange, or banana slices), and pretzels or crackers (graham, goldfish, etc.). Children will have access to their water bottles at this time and throughout the day.

Water Bottles

Each child should bring a water bottle labeled with his/her name. Water bottles will be sent home each day to be cleaned.

Accidents/Boo-Boo Reports

Teachers are responsible for supervision of children at all times. Even with supervision, accidents will happen. In the event that a child is injured while at

school, the teacher will administer first aid and communicate the incident to the parents via a written boo-boo report. For injuries that are beyond simple first aid, 911 will be called first, and then the parents/guardians will be notified via text or phone.

Holidays and School Closures

First Lutheran Preschool will follow the Howard County Public School schedule for holidays, professional workdays, and school closures with some exceptions. Unlike the Howard County Public Schools, the Preschool year runs September through May. Please see the online preschool calendar for exact closings.

Inclement Weather

Parents/Guardians must familiarize themselves with First Lutheran Preschool's weather closing policies as they relate to the Howard County Public School System.

If Howard County Schools close due to inclement weather, First Lutheran Preschool will be closed. If Howard County Schools open late (regardless of one hour or two) First Lutheran Preschool will open at 10:00 a.m. If Howard County Schools should make an announcement by noon to close early due to snow or inclement weather, morning classes will dismiss at the regular time.

The preschool year will be extended if the school cancels ten or more days due to inclement weather. The number of extra days added to the school year will be determined by the Board. In all other irregular situations that may affect the safety or usefulness of the school environment, we will make the decision to close the school on a case-by-case basis and inform parents and staff members of the situation via text message, e-mail, or phone. This may include electrical problems, heating/air-conditioning problems, or plumbing issues.

Parent Orientation

Parent Orientation is an evening meeting scheduled before school starts. Parent orientation is for **parents or guardians only** and provides a time to meet the Preschool Board Members, be introduced to school policies, and meet the teachers. All forms must be returned before Parent Orientation.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parents are welcome to request a conference with the director or their child's teacher at any time. Two formal parent/teacher conferences will be held each school year, one in November to review your child's Ages & Stages Screening and one in February.

Parties

We celebrate holidays together including Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter. Your child's teacher will inform you of any special instructions.

Potty Training

Children must be potty trained and use the potty independently before entering First Lutheran Preschool. Children should wear clothes that they can easily manipulate (i.e., no belts, overalls, etc.)

Each day has time set aside in the schedule to address potty time. Children are also encouraged to tell the teacher if they need to use the potty. A teacher or assistant is always present in the bathroom with children to supervise and encourage good hygiene.

We understand that accidents do happen, however, teachers will not change diapers, pull-ups, or underwear that has been soiled. In this instance, parents/guardians will be called with the expectation that they will come to change their child's clothing as soon as possible.

Preschool Board

The Preschool Board meets monthly and is responsible for the procedures and policies of First Lutheran Preschool. The Preschool Board consists of members of First Lutheran Church, the Director, the Senior Pastor, and at least one parent of First Lutheran Preschool.

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to participate in fundraisers and events to support the community of First Lutheran Preschool. Parents who would like to serve on the Board should contact the Director.

Recess

Outdoor play is an essential part of our program. If your child is well enough to attend school, he/she will be expected to participate in outdoor activities and should be dressed appropriately for the weather.

Scholarships

First Lutheran Preschool will reserve space for children of families in great need. Please contact the director to learn about eligibility requirements and the scholarship rates available. All scholarships are *partial* scholarships. Scholarships are funded through the Rev. Glenn & Stella Ludwig Preschool Scholarship Fund.

Termination of Enrollment

We assume that when you register your child, it is for the entire school year. If withdrawal becomes necessary, 45 days' written notice is required. No refunds are given in case of withdrawal, unless the school year has been paid in full, in which case the school will refund the tuition paid, apart from the non-refundable deposit. Any month or part of a month in which the child has attended is not eligible for a refund.

Toys from Home

Classes may schedule a "sharing" time when children can bring something from home to "share" during circle time. Toys that depict violence and toy weapons are not allowed at school.

Volunteers

Parents/caregivers are welcome but not required to volunteer in the classroom. Volunteers are always under the supervision of the teacher or director and are never placed in charge of the classroom. We ask that you do not bring siblings when you volunteer.

We are blessed to have a variety of different cultures attend our school. If you would like to share an element of your culture with your child's class, please discuss the opportunity with your child's teacher.

Preschool Partners Program

Church members that attend a training by the Preschool Director and complete a background check are invited to volunteer in the preschool classrooms. Preschool Partners attend chapel, play on the playground, play games, or help with center time during the regular school day. Preschool Partners' mission is to strengthen the connection of our preschool community to the church community.