

# Little Shepherds' Preschool



## Parent Handbook

# PARENT HANDBOOK

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Dear New **Little Shepherds** 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 and the Christian Education Council of First Presbyterian Church (FPC), Lakeland. It is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. **Little Shepherds** serves children from three months through four years.

We are delighted to have your family participating in our program, and 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 midmorning snack is provided and a bag lunch from home is served about noon.



## 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

**Children's Morning Out:** The \$75.00, non-refundable,

registration fee is due at time of registration. Your child's schedule is based on days needed by parent (example: could be one day, five days or any combination of days). If the Children's Morning Out program is full, your registration form will be placed on a waiting list and the registration fee is not due until a space is secured for your child.

**Preschool:** The \$75.00, non-refundable, registration fee is due at 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 is not 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.

## **Admission and Registration Procedures**

1. An interview with the Director.
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 staff of committed Christians 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.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Children to Staff</u>
Infants to 12 months	3/1
12- 24 months	5/1
24 -36 months	6/1
3 years	10/1
4 years	10/1

## Tuition

Tuition is charged monthly and is due on the 1st of each month. Payment can be received without a penalty on or before the 10th day of each month. Our late payment fee is \$10. A charge of \$30 will be assessed for any checks returned for insufficient funds. Payments may be mailed or brought to the Preschool office. **Make checks payable to “First Presbyterian Church.”**

## Arrival Procedures

**Children’s Morning Out:** For your child’s security parents must bring their child to the classroom and sign-in. Please provide staff, IN WRITING with any additional information pertaining to the child’s care for that day. For example, your child did not sleep well the night before, your child is teething, your family is moving, there is a new baby, etc. You must also provide telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day. It is important that you can be reached at all times!

**Preschool:** Children may be brought to the classroom or dropped off at the car ramp located on the circle drive at the south entrance of the Welcome Center.

## Departures

Children may leave the center **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 provide a written and signed note. A photo ID will be required at the time of pick-up.

### **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. Consistent late pickups could lead to the situation being reviewed by the Governing Board.

## **DISCIPLINE 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, not to punish children. 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 care giver/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/care giver 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 (hitting, biting, shoving, etc.) which endangers other children or teachers or which results in uncontrollable disruption of a healthy classroom environment, shall be subject to suspension or dismissal at the discretion of the Director with the approval of the Governing Board. Each incident of this nature will be dealt with on a case by case basis by said Board. 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 show 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; have symptoms of a possible communicable disease. These symptoms may include reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, diarrhea or abdominal pain. Please notify the school immediately when your child has a communicable disease. Children must be symptom free for 24 hours prior to their return to school.

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.

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 session and administer medication to their child. Diaper creams will be dispensed at the parent's request, if the cream is labeled with the child's name.

## **Emergencies**

It is the parent's responsibility to submit a Medical Release Form. In life threatening situations, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to the nearest health care facility.

# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

## Daily Contact

We encourage you to share a written note or briefly talk to the teachers about things happening in your family life on a daily basis. It helps us to better understand your child's behavior when, for example, he or she did not sleep well, is missing an absent parent, etc. We encourage you to ask teachers how the day went for your child and to talk with your child as well. The teachers take a great interest in you and your child. Please note however, that they cannot be distracted by lengthy discussions with parents while they are teaching, as their primary responsibility is to the children. Parent/teacher conferences may be scheduled when extended discussions are necessary.

## Keeping in Touch

Each day the teaching staff will prepare notes about the significant activities of your child. Your infant will have a daily record kept of feeding, diapering and sleeping patterns. Newsletters, announcements, flyers and other information will be available on the table in the hall.

## Visits

Parents may visit **Little Shepherds** at any time. These visits should be planned for times other than arrival and dismissal times. Parents who come to visit during the day must check in with the Director before going to the classroom. Please be discreet so as not to disrupt the activity in progress or upset any of the children (including your own). Parents must not distract teachers from their responsibility to the children with conversation about issues that do not directly relate to the care of their child for that day. Parents are invited to follow up their observations by talking with the Director or making an appointment for a teacher conference.

## Parent/Teacher Conferences

Feel free to request a conference with your child's teacher/care giver 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. Conference appointment times are arranged through the Director.

## Parent Participation

We welcome your involvement in our program through sharing your talents, ideas and resources. Interested parents are encouraged to become involved in a variety of ways: leading regularly scheduled classroom activities such as art, science, or sharing a special interest; participation in work days to repair and maintain toys and equipment. Other events needing parent involvement are: school picture days, book fairs, book club orders, classroom parties and Daddy/Daughter Dance.

## Little Shepherds' Governing Board

The Governing Board is the administrative organization which oversees **Little Shepherds'** operation and finances, approves a curriculum chosen by the Director, sets policies, procedures and fees, and selects a Director in the case of a vacancy in that position. On recommendation of the Board, the policies, budget and program will be brought before the Christian Education Council of the church, and its Session, if necessary, for approval. Once policy and the budget and program have been established, the Director will carry out these procedures.

The Governing Board is composed of the **Little Shepherds'** Director, the Director of Finance and Administration, the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor of Christian Education, the elders who chair the Children's Ministry Committee and the Christian Education Council. Any assistant chairs of this committee and council, any

Associate Pastor, and any parent or teacher involved in **Little Shepherds** may be asked by the members of the Governing Board to sit ex officio on the Board from time to time as any particular situation may require or it may be helpful to the work of the Board. The elder who chairs the Children's Ministry Committee will serve as Chairman of the Governing Board.

The Board will meet quarterly or more often as necessary and called by the Director of **Little Shepherds** or the Chair of the Governing Board. The Chairman will make a written report to the Christian Education Council of the church on a quarterly basis. A separate Parent/Teacher Council may be formed at the discretion of the Director to assist in programs and events.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### What to Bring: 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 a must.** 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.



### 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. Parents will need to send in additional changes of clothing, including socks while the children are becoming toilet trained.

## 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:

Bottles: For health regulations children in group care are not allowed to wander around with a bottle nor be put in bed with a bottle. For toddlers and preschoolers

we recommend providing only one drink with their lunch.

Snacks: A healthy snack is provided each day. We serve a simple midmorning snack of juice or milk, crackers, cheese, fruit, etc. Parents are welcome to send other snacks to be shared by the whole group. Please advise the teacher and director of food allergies, and avoid sending snacks with high sugar and salt content.

Lunch: A lunch is to be brought each day in a labeled, insulated box. All containers must be non-breakable and must be labeled. We encourage you to pack nutritious items. No soda pop or candies please. It is important that the lunch be ready-to-eat so your child can feed him/herself. Toddlers and preschoolers have the desire and ability to feed themselves. Sandwiches or finger foods are recommended. Items such as yogurt and soups are not recommended for toddlers since children at this age are not as able to manipulate a spoon, and much prefer to use their fingers. We are not able to microwave food in your child's lunch. If you require your child to have warm food for lunch, please send preheated food in a thermal container.

## **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.

## **Cooperation**

Participation in **Little Shepherds** is a privilege.

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'** Governing Board, a family is unable to resolve differences regarding the operation, policies, and/or procedures of the center, they will be asked to leave the center.

### **Child Abuse**

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

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