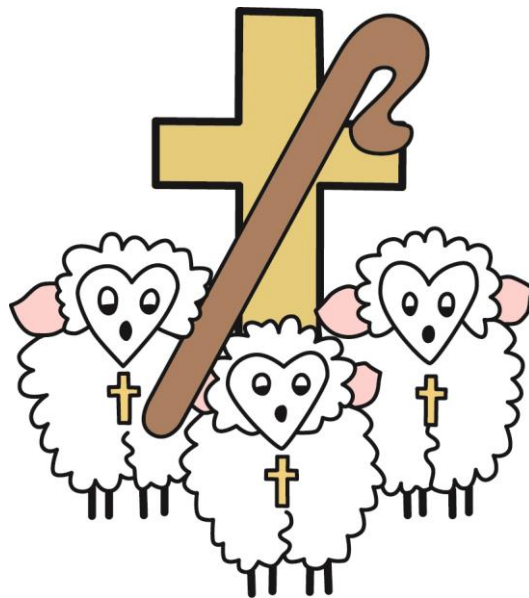


Parent Handbook

2020-2021



SHEPHERD'S CARE CHILDREN'S CENTER

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Shepherd's Care Children's Center
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Established in 1997 as a not-for-profit outreach program for community children ages three through five, Shepherd's Care Children's Center (SCCC) is a Christian ministry of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd. The governing Board of Directors, comprised of members of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, provides oversight for the Shepherd's Care Children's Center ministry and serves as a liaison to the congregation.

Christian Mission

Shepherd's Care Children's Center was founded on the love of God in Jesus Christ, and seeks to show that love in the teaching and care of the children entrusted to its safekeeping. To that end, Shepherd's Care Children's Center will love unconditionally, serve unsparingly, and care for unendingly each child who comes through the doors. When children move on from Shepherd's Care Children's Center they will do so having been touched by the redeeming love of Christ.

Philosophy and Curriculum

Shepherd's Care Children's Center (SCCC) is a Christ-centered preschool that focuses on social and spiritual development, as well as growth in all areas of development. Children are gently guided as they play and socialize, master academic readiness skills, develop large and small motor skills, and explore the world around them in a safe learning environment.

Chapel time is held twice weekly and is led by Pastor Tim Boerger and church volunteers. A Bible story is shared with the children and they are taught about Jesus' love for them. This theme is reinforced in the classroom through Bible-based stories and crafts. Children pray before they eat snack and lunch.

Two weekly enrichment programs are included with tuition. KidFit is a health and fitness class for preschoolers. Little Hands is a music and movement class.

Children participate in a variety of activities including the following:

Circle Time- Circle time provides the children with the opportunity to interact with each other as a group. Children will learn calendar skills, weather skills, sing songs, play games, read stories and learn about each other. During this time, the teacher will prepare children for the day.

Arts and Crafts- Arts and crafts projects stimulate a child's mind to be creative. These activities also assist in the development of fine and gross motor skills. Children achieve a sense of pride and accomplishment through the development of projects.

Letters and Numbers- Children will learn to recognize, identify, and eventually write letters and numbers. Sight words will be introduced.

Math and Science- Math skills will focus on number recognition, counting, sequencing, patterns, charts, and addition. Science will consist of simple science experiments usually focused around the theme of the week.

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Manipulatives- Manipulatives develop organizational skills like sorting, counting, comparing, classifying, matching, and shape recognition. Children integrate concepts through more physical involvement. By using more senses, children form more associations and learn.

Sensory Experiences- Children will be provided with a wide variety of hands-on, real-world sensory experiences appropriate for the child's age and stage of development. They will learn about all of their senses and how to use them.

Outdoors- Being outdoors greatly benefits children and outdoor time is integrated throughout the curriculum. Children will go outside daily, weather permitting.

Kindergarten Readiness- Children will be taught the necessary skills to ensure success in kindergarten.

Objectives

Shepherd's Care Children's Center strives to:

- Teach truths of Christian faith and include God as an integral part of the day.
- Model appropriate Christian values and attitudes.
- Encourage positive interaction among children and adults.
- Enable children to make a successful transition from home to school.
- Enable children to build a strong and positive self-concept.
- Encourage all children to express themselves freely and imaginatively.
- Support increasing responsibility and independence.

Admissions Policy

Shepherd's Care Children's Center is committed to the social and emotional development and education of young children. We admit children into our program in accordance with the age requirements of the state of Maryland Department of Education, Child Care Administration. We realize that there are many criteria that determine readiness for school, age being one of them.

Children with special needs will be considered for acceptance into Shepherd's Care Children's Center (SCCC) on an individual basis. We ask that parent(s) inform and discuss with the Director these needs prior to acceptance. Our staff will work with parents in regard to a child's needs, and the ability of our Center to meet those needs. We reserve the right not to accept or disenroll any family whose needs we cannot meet.

Enrollment priority is given to current students, siblings, siblings of alumni students, and to the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd members. Open enrollment is held in early spring and applications are taken on a first-come, first-serve basis for the following school year. Class placement is made on the basis of age. Placement is also based on the child's needs, request of the parents, and recommendations from teachers and the Director. Shepherd's Care Children's Center admits students of any sex, race, religion, national or ethnic origin.

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Staff

All staff members have four year degrees, are certified in CPR and First Aid and are required to take continuing classes in Early Childhood Education. Our teachers meet the requirements for Early Childhood Education as set by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Child Care Administration.

Arrival and Dismissal

The safety of our students is given high priority. Children must be escorted into their classroom to ensure that teachers know students have arrived. Never leave your child alone anywhere on the property. Do not leave any child unattended in a vehicle on the property. Teachers welcome students promptly at 9 AM when the doors will be unlocked. Prior to this time the teachers are making preparations for the day.

It is important that students are picked up promptly at 1 PM. The doors will be locked at 1:10 PM. SCCC reserves the right to impose a late fine if caregivers are late. *After one (1) warning is given to parents and/or caregivers there is a fee of \$1.00 per minute for every minute after the pick-up time.*

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than the person(s) listed on their emergency card, a written notification must be given to either the child's teacher or the Director. Provide the person's full name and inform this person that we will require proof of identification before releasing the child. If a last-minute or unexpected event causes plans to change for pick-up, please call the preschool and speak to a staff member or leave a detailed message. Persons who pick up children must be at least 16 years of age. Please let your child's teacher know in writing if you want your child to go home with a classmate.

Dressing Your Child for School

Please dress your child in washable play clothing that is appropriate for school. To protect children's feet and to ease movement, children should wear closed-toe shoes. Please label all clothes and items that belong to your child. This helps the teachers and children make sure that things get back to the right owner. We also encourage the children to be self-sufficient. Please send your child in clothes that encourage independence in getting ready to go outside and for toileting.

SCCC encourages daily outdoor play. Therefore, at the discretion of the Director, and if the outside temperature is above 32°F, the staff may decide to take the children outdoors. Appropriate clothing during winter must consist of at least a winter coat and hat. Parents may choose to send boots, mittens, and/or gloves. Any concerns should be addressed to the Director.

Snow and Inclement Weather Policy and School Closings

SCCC follows the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) decisions for closings. If MCPS is closed, SCCC is closed. If MCPS has a two-hour delay, SCCC will open at 11 AM. If MCPS has an early release, the preschool will close as scheduled at 1 PM.

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Any other closings due to natural disasters, emergency events, or building issues will be decided upon at the discretion of the Director and the Board of Directors.

For school closing information, parents can go to www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org, sign up for text alerts through Alert MCPS, follow the MCPS Twitter account, tune in to local TV and radio stations, or call the Board of Education recording at 301-279-3673. A message from SCCC will also be sent out through ClassDojo.

What NOT to Send to Preschool

We discourage children from bringing toys and special items from home. The teacher will notify you if the class has a special time to bring in a "show and tell" item. Other items that are not permitted at school are toy weapons, chewing gum, candy, and money.

Attendance

Parents should notify SCCC if your child will not be attending or will be late on a particular day.

Communication

It is important for the teachers and parents to have open communication. Please let the teachers and/or the Director know of events that may affect your child's emotional or physical health. Please keep in mind that any information shared in writing or verbal form pertaining to a child and their family is deemed confidential.

Monthly newsletters with a calendar listing upcoming events and classroom activities will be sent home and posted on ClassDojo. Other letters or notes will be sent home and posted as needed. Please check your child's bag on a daily basis.

We use ClassDojo, a free mobile app (and website), to connect teachers with parents and students. Teachers and parents can instantly share messages, updates and photos from class. Each family will receive their own personal and safe login for their child's profile.

An optional parent/teacher conference will be offered during the fall. Any issues or concerns will be brought to your attention. Please address any questions or concerns to your child's teacher or the Director. A conference can be requested at any time during the school year by the parent, teacher or the Director.

Please inform us of any positive feedback or areas of concern you may have. All of us strive to promote ongoing and open communication. We value your input.

If a student needs additional supports to access the SCCC curriculum, parents will be notified of supports and changes being implemented to meet the needs of their student. Staff and parents will determine how SCCC will communicate student progress. If progress is not being made through our program at SCCC, outside resources will be recommended (Child Find, Infants and Toddlers) to the parents. SCCC Staff will collaborate with outside professionals to support the student. If the changes are not benefitting the child, SCCC will work with the families to find a program that better meets the needs of the student.

Visitors

Parents, family, and other visitors may visit the preschool after receiving permission from the Director.

Behavior Management and Discipline Policy

SCCC is committed to helping children develop appropriate behaviors necessary to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning. Problem solving and redirection are typically employed for behavior management. Children will be guided to problem solve and determine a different, reasonable solution. If that does not resolve the issue, the child will be redirected to one or more appropriate behavior and/or activities. The children will also be guided as they learn important skills such as following directions, using appropriate language, and showing respect for others.

SCCC's teachers show loving, firm, and consistent encouragement at all times. Positive reinforcement teaches and helps the healthy development of a child's self-esteem. If these measures are ineffective and a child's behavior becomes aggressive, disruptive, or out of control, a staff member will take the child aside and speak to him or her about the unacceptable behavior. If necessary, a child may be temporarily separated from the group in order to prevent aggressive behavior towards others.

If a child's behavior is extremely intense or causes an injury, we will quickly notify the child's parents. We will also partner with parents to help teachers and the Director determine ways to help the child regain control of their behavior. If necessary, we may seek other professional assessment or support. In some extreme cases, use of outside support resources may become mandatory for the child to remain in our program. This is for the safety of all concerned. By law, and set forth by God's Commandments, no form of corporal punishment is allowed. This includes abusive language, ridicule, harsh or humiliating treatment, sarcasm, threat, or excessive use of negative language by an adult.

SCCC is required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. In terms of custody issues, SCCC abides by legally served court orders. A certified Court Order must be on file regarding custody matters. Custody disputes may not be addressed on preschool property.

Toilet Training

Although desirable, children do not need to be toilet trained to attend SCCC. Parents are responsible for providing diapers, wipes, and extra clothes. Once toilet trained, students must complete their visits to the toilet independently, including wiping. Staff members can provide only verbal assistance. Children should wear play clothes that are easy to manage themselves when using the toilet. Accidents are part of the toilet learning process for all young children. Please supply a complete change of clothes in your child's cubby. The classes take toilet breaks during the school day to provide children the opportunity to practice the skills.

Emergency Forms, Health, and Illness

All emergency and medical forms must be returned to the school no later than August 1st of the enrolling year. As a requirement of Maryland licensing regulations, children must have completed forms on file before starting school. Please make sure all emergency forms are up-to-date and include a reliable means of reaching at least two adults who are local in case of an emergency. If there is a change in address or any phone numbers, please give a written update to the Director as soon as possible.

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A child should not be sent to school if he/she is not feeling well. The child must be free of symptoms, including a fever, for *24 hours before returning to preschool.*

If your child is experiencing one or more of the following symptoms, you will be notified to come to Shepherd's Care Children's Center and pick up your child.

- Temperature higher than 99.8°F
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Red, pink, or crusted eyes
- Coughing or breathing problems
- Loss of energy, decrease in activity
- Rash/infection of skin
- Unusually dark, tea-colored urine
- Stomach ache
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Headache
- Pale or flushed face
- Thick or greenish mucus from nose
- Diarrhea, gray or white stool
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Earache

Any sick child will be separated from the group while waiting for their parents or caregivers to arrive.

Following an illness of three consecutive days or more, a written statement from the healthcare provider must be provided. This must state that the child is able to return to preschool on the regular schedule. Parents must notify the Director immediately if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease. We are required to report certain communicable diseases to the health department. We will also notify all students' parents of any possible exposure to a communicable disease. We reserve the right to ask for a Physician's note when there is any doubt about symptoms of being contagious.

It is expected that every child will participate in outdoor play. If this is not possible due to medical causes, a physician's note will be necessary.

If a medication is to be administered to a child during the school day, parents must fill out an authorization form and provide the Director with the prescription in the child's name.

Allergies

Allergies are to be noted on a child's health forms and emergency card. The teachers and Director must be notified of the condition, including details of the allergies and any emergency plan to be administered.

Snacks, Foods, and Nutrition

A mid-morning snack is provided by the preschool. A monthly snack menu is posted in each classroom. We encourage the children to taste the snack. Children are offered 1% milk with the option to choose water instead. Nutritional needs of preschool children are taken into consideration when planning our snacks. If your child has any food allergies or dietary restrictions, you may provide snacks for your child.

SCCC strives to be a peanut and tree nut free school. Please do not send any food items containing peanuts or tree nuts to school (e.g. peanut butter, almonds, walnuts, etc.). Please label sandwiches made with peanut butter alternatives like SunButter or WowButter. Check packages of processed food closely to ensure there are no peanut or tree nut ingredients. Packed lunches will be checked daily by preschool staff.

Birthdays

If your child has a birthday during the school year and you wish to provide a special activity or food, please let your child's teacher know in advance. Home birthday party invitations may also be distributed in the classroom if every child in the class receives an invitation.

Field Trip

SCCC offers a fall field trip which is a valuable learning experience enriching our classroom studies. A parent or caregiver is responsible for transporting children to/from the trip location and supervising children during the scheduled trip. Further information will be sent home several weeks prior to the field trip.

Tuition Payment/Financial Policy

The registration fee and deposit of one tuition installment are due at the time of application. The registration fee is non-refundable. The deposit is refundable only if notice of withdrawal is submitted in writing to the Director prior to June 1st of the enrolling school year. The deposit will be applied to your May tuition installment.

Tuition installments are due by the 1st of each month, starting in September. After the 10th of each month, a 10% late fee will be assessed to the overdue balance. Tuition must be paid by check, electronic payment (ACH), or certified funds. Checks should be made payable to Shepherd's Care Children's Center (SCCC) and placed in the tuition dropbox (located just inside the preschool's main entrance), given to the Director, or mailed to our preschool address. Please do not give your payment to the preschool teachers. Postdated checks will not be accepted. Returned checks will incur a fee of \$25.00. Once you receive written notification of a returned check, the balance must be paid within five (5) business days or a 10% late fee will be assessed to the overdue balance. If an account has two (2) returned checks, all future payments will then be required to be made by certified funds. If an account remains unpaid after thirty (30) days, the child will not be permitted to attend school until full payment is received.

The full amount of tuition is due regardless of attendance. There are no refunds or make-up days for unscheduled closures due to weather, emergencies, or days your child is absent from school.

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SCCC offers three types of discounts. Discounts are applied, individually, in the following order when applicable:

- 10% tuition discount for the younger child(ren), when two or more siblings are enrolled.
- 5% tuition discount if you prepay your yearly tuition by September 10th at the start of the school year or at the time of enrollment.
- 10% tuition discount for communicant members of The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd. A communicant member is determined by the Pastor.

If you would like to receive a statement for your tax records, please notify the Director. The tax identification number is 52-2019143.

Withdrawal

To withdraw during the school year, a 30-day notice is required and must be submitted in writing to the Director. During this time, you are responsible for all payments and any fees on your account. The deposit paid with registration will be applied to your final monthly tuition installment. Withdrawals that occur without the 30-day notification will be subject to the current month's tuition installment and an additional monthly installment.

Fundraisers

SCCC is a not-for-profit and will have fundraising events throughout the school year. These events are to earn funds for specific improvements, items, or building needs. We encourage each family's participation in these events, as they contribute to the overall quality of our program.

Donations

Remember us when cleaning out at home! Books, toys, craft and art supplies, small furniture, and many other items are greatly appreciated. Donations of your child's favorite healthy snack foods, books, games, or activities are also welcome. The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd helps support an interfaith clothing ministry. If we receive something that we cannot use, we pass it onto them. All donations are tax-deductible and a receipt can be given for each donation. Thank you!

Thank you for sharing your child with us! He/she is a very special child of God and we feel privileged to share in their preschool experience.