



FIRST
UNITED
METHODIST
PRESCHOOL

■ 2014-2015 ■

PARENT HANDBOOK





Celebrating our 35th year of excellence in early childhood education.

Established in 1979, First United Methodist Preschool is a preschool for children ages two months through five years. We welcome children of any race, religious belief or national heritage. Special needs children are accepted based on the preschool's ability to meet their specific individual requirements.

First United Methodist Preschool is an integral part of First United Methodist Church of Austin and an important mission of the church's ministry with young children and their families.

First Church is pleased to sponsor the preschool and welcomes a visit from any preschool families to acquaint you with our many programs and services.

From time to time we provide information to you, through the preschool, about programs that might be of interest. Please contact the church office, 512-478-5684, at any time if you have further questions.

First United Methodist Preschool

1201 Lavaca Street, Austin, TX 78701 | Ph:512-478-5709 | Fax: 512-478-9365
Email: preschool@fumcaustin.org | Web: www.fumcaustin.org/preschool

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Changes to the parent handbook and preschool policies will be sent via email to parents and staff.

FUM Preschool 2014 - 2015 Calendar

August 18-22, Monday-Friday	Staff Inservice & Preparation*
August 25, Monday	Parent Orientation*
August 26, Tuesday	First Day of Preschool
September 1, Monday	Holiday/Labor Day*
September 11 & 12, Thursday & Friday	All School Picnics
October 6, Monday	Vision/Hearing Screening
October 9 & 10, Thursday & Friday	Parent/Teacher Conferences*/Book Fair
November 7, Friday	Staff Development: NAEYC Conference*
November 26-28, Wednesday - Friday	Thanksgiving Holiday*
December 19- January 5	Winter Break*
January 6, Tuesday	Preschool Resumes
January 19, Monday	Staff Development*
February 7, Saturday	FUMP Family Music Festival
February 16, Monday	President's Day
March 5 & 6, Thursday & Friday	School Portraits
March 16 - 20, Monday - Friday	Spring Break*
April 3 & April 6, Friday & Monday	Holiday (Good Friday & Easter Monday)*
May 7 & 8, Thursday & Friday	Parent/Teacher Conferences*
May 21 & 22, Thursday & Friday	All School Picnics
May 25, Monday	Memorial Day Holiday*
June 4, Thursday	Last day of Preschool
June 5, Friday	Staff Inservice*

* = NO SCHOOL

Hours of operation: 9am – 1pm, Monday through Friday
Before School Care (M-F): 8:15am – 9:00am | After School Care (M-Th): 1:00pm – 2:30pm
Click this link for our online calendar: [FUMP ONLINE CALENDAR](#)

Our Philosophy and Beliefs

We believe...that children learn through play.

- Children naturally learn through what they see in the world. Teachers create a developmentally appropriate environment for each child to play, create, move, experiment, and express themselves.
- Children are active learners and have opportunities for choice, independence, and learning through play with real materials in hands-on direct ways.
- Children's activities, materials and classroom curriculum are selected based on individual children's development: physical, cognitive, social, emotional and language.
- Children are provided a balance of indoor/outdoor time, active and quiet play and individual, small and large groupings.
- Children need routine and continuity in the classroom and with adults. We create consistency in the classroom through predictable schedules, activities, and by limiting transitions and enrichment activities.

We believe...in supporting children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional & language development.

- Children express a range of emotions as a natural part of their development. We identify and acknowledge these emotions, and create opportunities for children to express them in healthy, constructive ways.
- Children model what they see. Teachers treat children and other staff with respect, kindness and empathy.
- Children are learning how to participate in group activities, get along with peers and develop trust for other adults. We support this task by creating opportunities for meaningful interactions with others, nurturing friendships, and teaching conflict resolution skills at every age.
- Children develop a sense of accomplishment and enhanced sense of self-esteem through competence and mastery of tasks. Children are provided opportunities to grow in independence and self-reliance through routines and activities.
- Children are developing a sense of what it means to be a spiritual being and grow in their faith and community. Through Chapel, we teach that God loves each of us, that He has created a world that we care for, and that we are to love and care for those around us.

We believe...in respecting individual differences in children's growth and development.

- Children learn best through small group play and one-on-one interactions with adults, therefore low child-to-teacher ratios are maintained.
- Children move through predictable developmental stages at their own rates. Children are provided support and encouragement and are not hurried through processes related to those milestones. Arbitrary age requirements are not imposed for milestones such as toileting, specific academic skills, etc., but rather celebrated by the adults around them.
- Children express creativity and self-expression through open-ended projects and experiences. Creative, child-directed play is encouraged in many forms such as drawing, painting, music, building, role playing and more.

We believe...in experienced, professional teachers.

- The teacher's role in the classroom is to be one of facilitator, nurturer, caregiver, and supporter of children, in a manner that is consistent with school philosophy.
- Teachers are early childhood professionals in the classroom who support and implement school philosophy, curriculum, and policies on a consistent yet flexible basis.
- Teachers maintain open communication with parents through various means: at arrival and departure, through lesson plans, electronic communications, and formal and informal parent conferences.
- Teachers attend high quality training in curriculum, age-appropriate guidance, dealing with special populations, health and safety practices, and other early childhood issues and topics.
- Teachers conduct themselves in a professional, courteous manner with parents, children, co-workers, & the church community.

We believe...in family communication and involvement.

- Diversity of each family and child is welcomed, respected, and incorporated in an inclusive environment.
- Families receive frequent ongoing communication from teachers regarding their child's developmental progress and classroom activities through various modes of communication.
- Families are incorporated into the program through a system of individual classroom activities and networks, preschool gatherings and events, invitations to First United Methodist Church fellowship and worship opportunities, and notifications of local community events.
- Families support the preschool through volunteer opportunities, annual giving, committee and classroom projects, and Preschool Board service.

Preschool Mission Statement

First United Methodist Preschool strives to create an atmosphere of love and acceptance in which each child can develop socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually.

Curriculum

First United Methodist Preschool follows a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum. Teachers observe children and note their individual developmental levels in the domains of physical, cognitive, social, emotional and language development. Based on the results of those observations, teachers create and implement activities and experiences for children to play, create, move, experiment, and express themselves. The classroom curriculum is built on the premise that children are active learners, and should have the opportunity for choice, independence and hands-on learning. Curriculum provides a balance for children of indoor and outdoor play, active and quiet play, and large and small groupings.

Goals

Physical: for children to develop both fine and gross motor skills through organized and incidental learning experiences, such as outdoor play, sensory play, manipulatives play, writing readiness, etc.

Cognitive: for children to develop cognitively and intellectually through organized and incidental learning experiences that encompass: conceptual learning, reading readiness, math readiness, and imaginative play.

Social and Emotional: for children to develop self-competence and self regulation skills, to become accustomed to being part of a group, to develop peer relationships, to learn and practice conflict resolution skills.

Admissions

Registration for 2015-2016 is held from January-March. Available placements will be filled in the following order:

1. Children of FUMP staff members
2. Children of FUM Church staff members
3. Currently enrolled FUMP families
4. Previously enrolled FUMP families
5. FUM Church families not currently enrolled in the preschool
6. Members of the community not currently enrolled in the preschool

Choice of days is determined by seniority and seniority is based on a family's length of enrollment. Class placement is based on children's birth dates. The Director determines final placement.

Our ratios are as follows: 1:3 - Infants | 1:4 - Toddlers | 1:5 - Twos | 1:6 - Threes | 1:8 - Fours

Tuition, Fees and Deposits

Monthly Tuition Rates			
	M-F	MWF	TTH
Infants/Toddler	\$540	\$350	\$255
Preschoolers	\$500	\$310	\$235
Before School Care	\$65	\$55	\$45
After School Care*	\$120	\$90	\$90

Tuition

Tuition is due on the first day of the month that your child is due to attend. Parents will receive an electronic invoice regarding their balance on or before the first of the each month. Full payment is due each month regardless of the number of days your child is expected to attend. **A \$20 late fee will be assessed if payment is received after the second Monday of each the month.** No adjustments are made for illness, vacation or transfer, or school closures. Days cannot be made up or changed. August and June tuition are pro-rated, taking into account the number of days staff are attending in-service and the number of days children are in attendance. Full monthly tuition is due all other months, September - April.

Tuition payments are received in the file pocket on the outside of the preschool office door. Checks should be made payable to FUM Preschool. If you need a receipt for your payment, please write "receipt" in the memo portion of your check.

Please contact the Director if special arrangements need to be made regarding when your tuition will be paid. CASH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR TUITION PAYMENTS.

Before School Care (BSC)

Children may come to preschool at 8:15 am on a pre-arranged basis for an additional fee. Children may be enrolled in this group by the month or the year. Drop-in attendance is allowed with prior director approval. Availability is determined by the number of staff available and placement is based on families first date of enrollment. **No substitutions or alterations to schedules are permitted.**

After School Care (ASC)

Children may attend After School Care from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm, solely on a month-to-month basis for an additional fee. Drop-in attendance is allowed with prior director approval. As with BSC, availability is determined by the number of staff available and placement is based on families first date of enrollment. **No substitutions or alterations to schedules are permitted. * There is no ASC on Fridays. ***

Registration Fee

A registration fee of \$200 is due with your child’s school year application in late January. **This fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.**

Security Deposit

The security deposit is due on May 1, 2015, and holds your child’s place for the 2015-2016 school year. The amount of the deposit is one month’s tuition. Please reference the number of days that your child is attending to determine your payment amount.

No regular tuition payment is due on May 1, 2015 (your previously paid tuition deposit applies to that month.) If your child is not returning for the 2015-2016 school year, no deposit or tuition is due May 1, 2015. If your child has registered for the 2015-2016 school year, you will be invoiced regarding next years’ deposit in late-April. **The tuition deposit is non-refundable.**

Withdrawal from Preschool/Reducing Days of Attendance

Sometimes it becomes necessary for a child to withdraw from the preschool before the end of the normal school year in May. Please contact the director regarding early withdrawal for specific details. The tuition deposit is non-refundable.

Listing of Fees and Special Events (please reference page 11 for a description of our special events.)

Along with monthly tuition and fees, there are several event/services that the preschool provides to children and families for an additional cost. See the next page for a monthly listing of events:

August	Prorated August tuition Three - five year olds prepay vision & hearing School shirts & lunch kits (optional)	January	Regular tuition Registration Fee for 2014-2015 Music Festival sponsors (optional)
September	Regular tuition Frosting Fund	February	Regular tuition Music Fest tickets & t-shirts (optional)
October	Regular tuition Book Fair (optional) Vision and hearing for 3-5 year olds	March	Regular tuition Summer registration (optional) Class portraits (optional)
November	Regular tuition	April	Regular tuition
December	Regular tuition	May	Tuition Deposits for 2014-2015 Regular BSC and ASC tuition June prorated tuition

Preparing for the First Day of School

We have two planned activities to help introduce your family to your child's teacher and FUM Preschool:

1. **Classroom Visits:** Your child's teacher will contact you to schedule a classroom visit in late August to meet you and your child. This is your child's time with his/her teacher. During the classroom visit, she is interested in seeing the classroom materials and play equipment that interest your child. Due to time restraints, visits should last approximately 10-15 minutes. Please consult our ["SAYING GOODBYE"](#) brochure for more information. (Parent concerns should be discussed in private on the telephone or in person at another time.)
2. **Parent Orientation:** The best thing you can do for your child to help ensure a successful preschool year is to attend parent orientation! Orientation has two parts and we ask for mandatory attendance for the entire duration. Part one is a general, school-wide meeting where parents hear important descriptions of the preschool operations, policies, parking issues, logistics, etc. Part two is with your child's individual teacher where you will learn information/ policies specific to that classroom. **This is for parents only** (however, small babes in arms are okay). Even if you are a returning family we ask that everyone attend orientation since so many things evolve and change from year to year.

Arrival and Departure

It is extremely important to inform teachers and document the arrival and departure of each child. Parents must sign and note the time on the daily attendance sheet at drop-off and pick-up each day. Parents must get a visual and/or verbal confirmation from the child's teacher as well. Upon arrival, teachers will perform a visual and/or physical health check for children for any of the above symptoms. Preschool staff should be notified when someone other than the parent is picking a child up from preschool. When someone unknown to our staff is picking up your child, s/he should be prepared to produce identification to the preschool office staff.

Teachers use the time before 9:00 am for preparation, so please do not bring your child early. Pick-up from preschool is between 12:45-1:00 pm. To assist in the transition from school to home, your child's teacher may "close" some learning centers to help departure go more smoothly. There is a late pick-up charge after 1:00 pm of \$1 per minute. Please pay the teacher directly and in cash. The clock in the classroom will be the standard in such cases. Please call the preschool if you are unavoidably detained. Our staff has work-related and personal obligations after 1:00 pm. Your consideration and assistance in this matter is appreciated.

When bringing your child to preschool, make sure your child is secure in the knowledge that you have kissed him/her good-bye, that he/she is loved, and that someone will pick him/her up after preschool. Your child may display separation anxiety upon your departure. The teachers will be ready to comfort and talk with your child if this happens. Children normally settle into the day quickly, but if they do not, your child's teacher will contact you. The preschool office has literature on saying goodbye available to parents. Please consult our ["SAYING GOODBYE"](#) brochure for more information. Copies can be found on the preschool office door.

Preschool attendance and arrival time is not mandatory. When your child is absent from preschool, a courtesy email to the teacher is appreciated.

Items / Toys from Home (i.e. special toys, blankets, etc.)

All toys should be left at home or in the car when you bring your child to school. Please speak to your child's teacher regarding security blankets, pacifiers, and special items. The preschool staff will assist in this transition.

Parent Participation and Communication

First United Methodist Preschool is an inclusive environment in which the diversity of each child and family is welcomed, respected and incorporated into the environment. Families are incorporated into the program through a series of individual classroom activities and networks, school wide gatherings and events, and invitations to FUMC sponsored events. Communication is important for a successful program. Our staff is prepared to work with you so your child may have the best possible experience at preschool.

- In order to stay on top of current events at FUMP, we recommend that you check your email prior to each day your child attends preschool. Also, email is the best way to communicate with the office as well, as we check the preschool email throughout the day. Please consult our [CURRENT EVENTS](#) listing for more information.

- The preschool office will post regularly to our website [CURRENT EVENTS PAGE](#) and [ONLINE CALENDAR](#) informing parents of the many activities at FUMP. Please read these carefully.
- Special notices, changes, and general parent information from your child’s teacher or the preschool office are occasionally distributed in your child’s cubby or diaper bag. Notices are also sent via email or on white boards, so please remember to check daily. Any change in preschool policies will be announced through email notification.
- Parents can update their contact information via email to the preschool office at any time.
- Parents are encouraged to share any classroom or program concerns they might have with the Director via appointment, email or use our online [COMMENDATIONS/CONCERNS FORM](#) for such correspondence.
- Parents are always welcome to visit their child’s classroom to observe. It is most important for children to see that their parents and teachers are cordial and that their parents are interested in their preschool experience. Periodically teachers will have a sign-up sheet for parents who are needed to assist with various activities.
- TDFRS Child Care Licensing requires that each staff member receive annual training in child abuse and neglect prevention. Further, child care licensing mandates that schools must work to increase awareness of issues regarding child abuse and neglect. Some examples of abuse and neglect are: leaving a child alone or in a vehicle unattended, not securing a child in a seat belt or booster seat, unexplained marks or bruises, shaken baby syndrome and frequent child hygiene issues. The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you need to report any suspected abuse or neglect. FUMP promotes prevention techniques such as developing parenting/teaching skills, understanding the benefits of nonviolent discipline techniques, understanding and meeting children’s emotional, physical and developmental needs and helping adults identify other needs they may have and offer assistance in getting that additional support. FUMP will seek the assistance of appropriate community organizations when matters of child abuse and neglect arise. Parents of a child who is the victim of child abuse or neglect should seek information from Child Protective Services at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection or through The Texas Attorney General’s Office. <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/childabuse.shtml>
- [TDFRS CHILD CARE MINIMUM STANDARDS](#) are available to parents to review online. as well as the most recent licensing inspection report. Further, parents may contact the local child care licensing office at 834-3195 or reference their website at [CHILD CARE LICENSING](#). You may contact the child abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400. Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal activities are subject to harsher penalties.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled twice during the preschool year. The fall conference is designed to inform parents of the child’s adjustment to preschool. It is also an opportunity for the parents to share any specific developmental concerns they might have. The spring conference is to share developmental achievements, preferences, and recommendations for specific needs. **There is no regular preschool on these days.** Child care is provided by our preschool staff during the conference for your currently enrolled child. Should you like an additional conference, the teacher can arrange one at any time during the year.

Parent Substituting

Parents are encouraged to substitute in the classrooms. This is an excellent way to get to know the preschool. Parents are a valuable resource for the preschool when staff members are ill or need to be out of the classroom. “Tuition Bucks”, worth \$20 are earned for substituting for the entire preschool day and may be used toward the following month’s tuition. For volunteering parents, please be aware that your child may behave differently while you are in his/her classroom. In most cases, the teacher will let you deal with any problems involving your child. However, there will be times when the teacher will need to be involved. Please do not be offended by this. Most children respond better to the teacher at preschool in discipline situations than to their parents.

Staff/Parent Private Child Care Arrangements

If a parent chooses to employ a FUMP staff member for private child care (“babysitting”), the parent, staff member and Director are required to complete, sign and date a hold harmless document to be kept on file in the preschool office. The document must be completed for each individual staff member and must be renewed annually.

Parking

Our downtown location does create a challenge. Please be mindful of others when parking in our parking lot. NEVER PARK IN SPACES MARKED WITH “CHURCH BUSINESS ONLY” AT DROP-OFF, PICK-UP, OR DURING THE DAY. Each marked space is assigned to a church staff member. Spaces designated for “PRESCHOOL: M-F 8-2” are for FUMP teachers and assistants. An empty place in the preschool section is frequently only a temporary situation. Double parking behind the “Preschool Teacher” section is necessary and appropriate, however, **DO NOT double park behind the Texas Trial Lawyers parking spaces.** Also, please do not park in or block any handicapped parking spaces - you may be ticketed. If you are double parked during the

preschool day, please notify the preschool office and leave your keys with the office staff. Please reference our website for [HELPFUL HINTS](#) for parking. Also, coin-operated metered parking is available on Lavaca and Colorado streets. Please do not leave any child in a car unattended. The parking area is used by many people and it is not safe to leave a child alone. Parents may watch a sleeping child for one another.

Inclement Weather

In most instances, FUM Preschool will follow AISD's pattern for opening and closing school during severe weather. In the event that AISD has a delayed opening, please check the preschool website and voicemail for updates.

Emergencies

If a child is sick or injured:

In most cases, the child will be in the office with the Director, teacher, or assistant until the parents can arrive to get the child following notification by the staff. There are some instances when your child will remain in his/her classroom. The parent of the child will then be notified. We request that parents arrive within 30 minutes of being notified to pick up their child.

If a child is seriously injured or ill:

EMS would be called immediately and a FUMP staff person would perform the necessary procedure until EMS arrives. The parent would be notified at the same time EMS is called by sending someone to the preschool office to call the parent. The teacher would accompany the child and the rest of the class would be supervised by the class assistant, Director or other teachers.

School-wide emergencies (evacuations, storm drills, etc.)

The preschool has a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan that includes school procedures for emergency situations. Please direct any specific questions to the Director.

Off-site evacuation locations

In the event of an evacuation, the preschool would relocate to one of these locations depending on the nature of the threat.

[Tarrytown United Methodist](#)

2601 Exposition Blvd., 78703

Telephone: 512-472-3111

**closed Mondays*

[Faith United Methodist](#)

2701 South Lamar Blvd., 78704

Telephone: 512-444-4707

[Crestview United Methodist](#)

1300 Morrow Street, 78757

Telephone: 512-451-1741

Health

The State of Texas Department of Family and Regulatory Services and the City of Austin Health Department have set forth health policies that regulate child care programs. FUM Preschool is required by law to follow these mandates. We will make no exceptions.

Each child is required to meet standard immunization requirements prior to beginning classes at the preschool. No students will be allowed to attend class without proper medical forms on file. We also expect parents to provide written updates of immunization records to the preschool office in a timely manner. Additionally, FUMP is required to provide vision/hearing screening for all 3- 5 year olds.

We ask for the cooperation of parents in maintaining our excellent health standards. Should a child have any contagious disease, please notify the preschool so that other parents can be alerted to the fact that their child may have been exposed. A courtesy email to the preschool office when a child will be absent is appreciated. Parents will be notified when children develop symptoms of illness during the course of the day. Please make every effort to pick up your child within 30 minutes of the initial phone call. If there is a medical emergency and the parents are not available, the child's physician and/or emergency contact will be called.

Parents are asked to keep their child home when the child:

- Has evidence of a fresh cold
- Has a temperature of 99° or more
- Has had a fever within the last 24 hours
- Has sore or discharging eyes
- Has had an upset stomach (vomiting or diarrhea) within the last 24 hours
- Has a rash (until diagnosed by a doctor)

Please do not send your child to preschool with symptoms that are masked by medications such as motrin, tylenol etc.

For more information regarding communicable disease mandates for child care centers, please reference the TDFRS website for Appendix V: [TDFRS MINIMUM STANDARDS](#)

No medicine will be administered by preschool personnel, with the exception of emergency first aid. If you have a sick child with you, call the office and request a staff person to bring your child to the car. Sick children should not enter the school.

Children with Food Allergies

Food allergy symptoms are most common in babies and children, but they can appear at any age. You can even develop an allergy to foods you have eaten for years with no problems. Learn more about the types of food allergies. While any food can cause an adverse reaction, eight types of food account for about 90 percent of all reactions: eggs, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy. Symptoms of an allergic reaction may involve the skin, the gastrointestinal tract, the cardiovascular system and the respiratory tract. They can surface in one or more of the following ways: vomiting and/or stomach cramps, hives, shortness of breath, wheezing, repetitive cough, shock, trouble swallowing, swelling of the tongue, weak pulse, pale or blue coloring of skin, dizziness or feeling faint, anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening reaction that can impair breathing and send the body into shock; reactions may simultaneously affect different parts of the body (for example, a stomachache accompanied by a rash)

Parents of children with food allergies are required to notify the director in writing or via email regarding their child's allergy. The preschool has policies/protocols for managing children's allergies and we implement those as needed, based on the severity of the allergy. The policy is available for parents to review in the preschool office.

The preschool reserves the right to prohibit specific foods from a preschool classroom, area, or full campus, if deemed necessary by a child's allergist/pediatrician.

Snacks / Lunch /Breastfeeding

FUM Preschool is committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the preschool experience. The children not only benefit physically, but also learn the principles of good nutrition. Parents provide a lunch and morning snack for their child. All containers sent to preschool should be easy for your child to open fostering independence. [LUNCH KITS](#) are available for purchase in the preschool office. FUMP recommends that parents provide a cold pack in their child's lunch to ensure proper temperature of food brought to preschool. Water is served at meal and snack times. Cups are provided by the preschool. Child care licensing states that no food brought from home can be shared at preschool (TDFRS Reg 746.3309). Parents of children who are breastfeeding are welcome to send breast milk with their infant to preschool. Also, mothers who are breastfeeding may use the adult rocking chairs in the infant classroom, or they may use Room 103 in the education building as well. Parents can find more information about [BREASTFEEDING](#) on our website.

Whole foods rather than processed foods are encouraged. Send such foods as sandwiches, cheese, fruits, vegetables, and pasta in your child's lunch. Foods that contain excessive amounts of sugar, salt, food additives and preservatives will not be served, such as candy, cookies, cakes, pudding, Go-gurts or salty chips. Children under two years old need fat for energy, growth and proper brain development. Fat should not be limited in their diet. For additional guidance, please reference our [COOL SCHOOL FUEL](#) page.

The preschool is currently operating under a ban of all nuts and nut products. Please check out our [NUT BAN MEMO](#) for more detailed information and the [SNACK SAFE GUIDE](#) for suggestions for appropriate snack and lunch items.

Further, according to minimum standards for child care centers, 90% of fatal choking's occur in children under 4 years of age. Therefore, we reserve the right to remove any food brought to school that could be deemed a choking hazard. Examples of some choking hazards are whole grapes, dried fruit, popcorn, hotdogs cut into rounds, or any chunk of food larger than can be swallowed whole.

Birthdays

Simple recognition is given to each child on his or her birthday. Parents may bring a set of disposable party plates and cups to be used at snack or lunch. We will use these to serve the food that the children brought from home. Also we will recognize the child's special day with a birthday sticker that they may wear throughout the day.

Please do not send invitations for parties to preschool to be passed out unless everyone in the class is invited. No gifts are to be exchanged at preschool. **DUE TO CHILD CARE LICENSING MANDATES, PLEASE DO NOT BRING BALLOONS TO PRESCHOOL.**

Special Events and Celebrations

Each year the preschool children and families will participate in several gatherings. Below is a brief overview of our annual special events:

Parent Orientation (August)

The best thing you can do for your child to help ensure a successful preschool year is to attend parent orientation. Orientation has two parts and we ask for mandatory attendance. Part one is a general, school-wide meeting where parents hear important descriptions of the preschool operations, policies, parking issues, logistics, etc. Part two is with your child's individual teacher where you will learn information/policies specific to that classroom. This is for parents only (however, small babes in arms are okay). Children will have their "orientation" either in a classroom or home visit scheduled by his/her teacher. Even if you are a returning family we ask that everyone attend orientation since so many things evolve/change from year to year.

The Frosting Fund (September)

Our most important fundraiser of the year. 100% of all donations go directly to the preschool to purchase equipment and or materials for the classrooms. Our goal is 100% family participation and extended family members are welcome to donate on behalf of their grandchildren, nephews, nieces, etc. For more information about the Frosting Fund, please check our website [here](#).

All-School Picnics (September & May)

This school-wide picnic is a great way to connect with other preschool families. Weather permitting; our picnics are on the capitol grounds just across Colorado Street from the preschool from 12pm – 1pm on Thursday and Friday. There is regular preschool these two days. Bring a blanket to sit on and a brown bag lunch for your family.

Parent/Teacher Conferences (October & April)

These 20-30 minute sessions are conducted twice each year in the Fall and Spring. The conferences are an opportunity to ask questions of your child's teacher. You must sign up for a conference time. Sign-up sheets are posted on classroom doors approximately 2 weeks before conferences. Childcare for your enrolled child is available.

Book Fair (October)

This coincides with our Fall Parent/Teacher conferences. It's a great opportunity to buy gifts for the holidays. Teachers typically have a "wish list" of books that families can purchase for their child's classroom. You may preview [SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIRS](#) selections on their website.

Vision/Hearing Screenings (October)

These screenings are required for children ages 3 to 5. (Your pro-rated August tuition includes the fee for these services if your child is at least 3 years of age on September 1.)

FUMP Family Music Festival (February)

This community-wide event celebrates Austin's unique music culture on a preschool level. With live musical entertainment, arts and crafts, concessions, a silent auction and lots more this is a wonderful, family friendly event. We encourage you to invite family and friends. This is a great opportunity to volunteer as well. For current information, please check our [MUSIC FESTIVAL](#) website.

Group & Individual Portraits (March)

You will prepay for the group photo. Individual proofs are sent out and you have the option of ordering once you see the proofs. Orders are placed on the photographer's website: [DABBS PHOTOGRAPHY](#).

Preschool Workday (April)

Our workday is held during spring parent conferences. This involves minor equipment / playground repairs and cleaning to our campus. All supplies are provided.

Field Trips and Special Visitors

Field trips may be scheduled during the school year in the 3 and 4 year old classes. Notification for these trips will be posted outside of your child's classroom at least 48 hours in advance. Parents will also receive notice via email or written communication. All field trip transportation will be walking trips or city buses. Every child should wear a FUMP T-shirt and

comfortable walking shoes. One adult for every 4 children will accompany the class for adequate supervision. Special visitors will be scheduled throughout the school year for children in the three and four year old classes. These events will be scheduled based on children's interests, developmental level and to enrich the regular program curriculum. Parents will be given advanced notice of the event and they are typically scheduled on MWFs. Children enrolled on TTH will be invited to attend with a parent chaperone.

Enrichment Activities

As a part day program, we focus on time spent in the classroom, playing, exploring and socializing. We also supplement our classroom experiences with activities that enrich your child's preschool experience. Chapel is held once per week for three & four year old children, Stretch-N-Grow (a movement class) twice per month on Mondays for three and four year old children, and music twice per month for all ages. Activities/frequency are determined by age appropriate curriculum, attention span, and each class's developmental readiness. If your child is attending FUMP on a Tuesday/ Thursday basis, enrichment activities are purposefully limited. As they are attending FUMP only 8 hours per week, our intent is to focus on the core classroom experience - learning center activities and socialization among the children.

Screen time

FUMP does not use computers or similar electronic devices as a part of the curriculum.

Outdoor play

Children play out of doors daily, weather permitting. Children will go outside as long as temperatures and wind chill readings are above 32 degrees, however, outside play time can be adjusted/amended at the teacher's discretion.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, washable play clothes in which they can move easily and are free to play and explore. Clothing should be simple enough for the child to manage alone. We discourage heavy belts, complicated snaps and straps, etc., which the child cannot work himself/herself. If your child wears diapers, make sure the clothes have leg snaps or that the clothes are easy to change (e. g. skirts). Please keep in mind that any clothing worn to preschool will be subjected to paint, glue, outside elements, etc. Please be sure your child's shoes fit correctly. We prefer closed toe, closed heel shoes as they are best for climbing, playing and going on field trips. **Crocs, flip-flops, rain boots and western boots are inappropriate for preschool activities.**

Animals

Some teachers may have classroom pets. Our staff ensures that all pets are properly cared for and that any necessary vaccinations are up to date. When children come into direct contact with animals, teachers will ensure that children wash hands appropriately.

Summer Term

FUM Preschool has summer terms, typically lasting 2 to 3 weeks each, and spanning from mid June through late July and early August. The dates for the summer terms are published in February of each school year and registration is held after Spring Break. The tuition is determined by the number of weeks in each term. Before School Care and After School Care are offered as a part of the summer program. During our summer program, children will participate in sprinkler play each day during playground time on our upper playground, which has a protective solid-surfacing material. The children will engage in sprinkler play and the use of tubs of water. No wading pools will be used.

Discipline

One of the main objectives of FUM Preschool is to help children develop self-discipline. Our guidance techniques offer children clear expectations and options to create a positive environment. To encourage this, we attempt to practice discipline which:

- shows each child understanding and patience.
- redirects the child when necessary to another activity.
- sets reasonable limits.
- is consistent, loving and firm.
- helps the child talk about misunderstandings rather than hurting another child.
- is individualized and consistent for each child.
- is appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and

- is directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishments;
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

If a child's behavior becomes a chronic problem and is unresponsive to the teacher's attempts to alter the behavior, the preschool may follow any of these steps appropriate to the situation:

- hold a conference with the parents, teacher and Director to discuss the situation and to develop methods of correcting the behavior problem.
- ask the parent to have the child examined by a pediatrician.
- ask the parent to have the child evaluated by a child guidance professional.
- when all else fails, the preschool reserves the right to request the immediate withdrawal of a child.

Biting

Children sometimes bite other children. Although not all children bite, biting is considered a normal stage in a child's development. Here are some common reasons why children may bite:

- Teething:** Toddlers are often cutting teeth and it hurts. Chewing on something relieves the itch and stops the pain momentarily.
- Sensory Exploration:** Toddlers are very good at using all of their senses to learn about the world. The "oral mode", an important style of learning for infants, continues into toddler hood. They bite everything, not just their playmates.
- Cause and Effect:** Children are eager explorers. They are constantly studying cause and effect. Biting produces a predictable response. Often, the response is dramatic: there is a lot of noise/attention from adults.
- Self-Assertion:** This is probably the most common reason children bite. It's a way to express frustration when they don't yet have the language skills to do so.

The preschool staff takes action to reduce the number of biting incidents, including providing access to teething toys, providing numerous sensory exploration activities, providing opportunity to explore cause and effect and offering toddler's options/alternatives to reduce frustrations.

Parents are not told the name of the child who bit their child. Parents of the biter are informed and work together with the teachers in hopes of preventing further incidents of biting. We recognize how upset parents may be when they learn their child has been bitten; however, we also recognize that biting is a normal component of child development. Despite our many concerted efforts to prevent biting incidents, they are bound to occur. No child is ever excluded from our program **solely** because of biting.

Toilet Learning

Toilet learning is an important task in child development. We take a developmental approach with milestone, just as our philosophy underscores. There is no predetermined age at which children must be toilet trained and out of

diapers. Your child's teacher will work with you through this transition and communication is essential for the child's success. The preschool has a [FUMP TOILET LEARNING](#) handout on this topic for parents to read and discuss with their child's teacher.

Grievances

The failure to handle differences and concerns can disrupt harmony among parents and staff and affect the well-being of children. We encourage parents to use conflict resolution steps when problems arise, such as talking directly to the appropriate individuals, identifying the problem, working together to devise possible solutions, implementing the agreed-upon solution and giving feedback to see if the solution worked. There may be times that this process fails. Therefore, the following procedures are established for expressing complaints: If you have a concern about a staff member and/or classroom incident:

1. Talk to the teacher in charge at the time the problem arose. If this person is a teaching assistant, the lead teacher needs to be informed as well.
2. If the problem is not resolved, talk with the Director. More than one meeting may be necessary to fully understand the depth of your concern and to give the Director the opportunity to solve the problem.
3. If the issue is still not resolved, please put your concerns in writing to the Preschool Director stating your desire to issue a formal grievance. **(Email is not considered adequate at this level)**. Please include specific date, time, people and place of the incident. The Preschool Director will return a written response within 10 school days. Both documents will be forwarded to the FUM Preschool Board Chair for information purposes only (there will be no Board Chair action at step #3).

If the matter is still unresolved, you may put your concerns in writing to the FUM Preschool Board stating your desire to issue a formal grievance. **(Email is not considered acceptable at this level)**. Again, please include specific date, time, people and place of the incident. Letters will be considered by the appropriate committee or designate and a response will be given following the next scheduled board meeting. Any decision of the board will be considered the final resolution of the matter.

The preschool reserves the right to ask a family to withdrawal at any time.

Preschool Board of Directors

The First United Methodist Preschool Board structure and method of operation was laid out in the [FUMP BY-LAWS](#) created by the church. The FUMP Board is made up of 13 preschool parents (voting members), as well as the Preschool Director and the church's Director of Children and Family Ministries (both non-voting members). Members are nominated by a committee made up of the Board Chair (who heads this committee), the Preschool Director, and at least 2 other members of the Board. Once the nomination committee has put together a slate of candidates for open Board positions, this list is presented to the Board for approval and those nominated are asked to join. When considering nominations for the Board, several factors are taken into consideration:

- Board members must have had their children enrolled in the school for at least one full semester prior to joining.
- All Board members are asked to serve for at least two years, thus only parents who will be in the school at least that long are considered.
- At least half of the Board parents must be church members.

Finally, the nominations committee considers other qualities that have proven over time to make for good Board members and which reflect the desires of the church. These qualities include the ability to do hard work, dedication, loyalty, honesty, professionalism, ability to maintain confidentiality, ability to put the good of the school as a whole above personal interest or friendships, commitment to following the policies and procedures of the school and the church, and willingness to accept and support the decisions of the majority of the Board and work within them. Anyone interested in being considered for nomination to the Board should contact the Board Chair.