

Harmony Preschool Parent Handbook

2011/2012

Harmony Preschool Mission Statement

The task of our church is to minister to the needs of all persons and to ensure for them a caring community. Harmony Preschool recognizes each child as a child of God and carries a commitment to help enable persons to live life in the fullness that Jesus proclaimed. Through the ministry of the Preschool, extend this nurturing ministry of the church to children, families and the community.

Harmony Preschool offers a loving environment to foster a positive self image, creativity, and social development. We offer an environment to encourage spiritual development suitable to the age of the child being taught. We believe children benefit from hearing about God's love.

Harmony Preschool encourages parental involvement to help make this the best possible preschool experience for our children.

Harmony Preschool Administration

The Preschool is overseen by the Preschool Board. The Board is comprised of:

Harmony UMC Minister

Harmony Preschool Director (Non-Voting)

Current Preschool Parent (1)

Harmony UMC Members (3 - one of whom serves as the Chairman of the Board)

The Harmony UMC Treasurer serves as the bookkeeper for all of financial matters. Preschool Board meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the last Monday of each month and are open to all interested parents and church members.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Harmony Preschool serves ALL of God's children, regardless of disability, race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

Program Philosophy

Harmony Preschool strives to offer the finest in Early Childhood Education, and to direct attention to the Christian faith through value education – love, faith, hope, caring, sharing, forgiving, cooperation and appreciation. The primary value permeating our program is that every person is valued by God. Our goal is to provide an environment where each child has opportunities to develop a sense of self-worth and his/her own unique gifts as a child of God.

The philosophy of Harmony Preschool is that children learn best through play and hands on experiences. This is best accomplished through the use of manipulatives, games and learning centers rather than with drill and worksheets. Learning activities are designed to meet each child's developmental needs. The classrooms are set up to provide opportunities for free choice, large and small group activities and individual activities.

A preschool program housed in a church is expected to reflect the highest values and the best of care. The goal of Harmony Preschool is to provide a safe, loving, fun place to learn and grow physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Harmony Preschool is considered a Religiously Exempt regulated child day program by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Social Services. The Preschool not only

meets, but exceeds, the necessary fire, health and safety regulations for both the facility and staff for programs operated by a church.

Public Liability Insurance

Harmony Preschool is covered by public liability insurance in compliance with state guidelines. The type of insurance is not to be confused with accidental injury insurance, which provides medical benefits to the injured. Accidental injury insurance is provided for each child in the Preschool as part of the registration fee.

Liability

Harmony Preschool shall not be held responsible for any accident, nor shall any member of the Preschool staff, except as covered by the insurance on the Preschool.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The Preschool staff is legally responsible to report any concerns of abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services. The staff has received training in recognizing abuse and neglect and of the proper procedure in reporting these concerns. To report concerns of abuse or neglect, parents may call 703-771-5437.

General Staff Qualifications

All members of the staff of Harmony Preschool have at least one year experience working with young children in a group setting (Church School, Bible School, Brownies/Cub Scouts, Preschool, Elementary School, Family Day Care). All Staff are required to participate in a minimum of 4 hours of staff development training per year. This may include workshops, lectures, and demonstrations in the areas of child development, classroom management, health and safety issues or curriculum.

Staff members support the Christian foundations of Harmony Preschool. All staff have had reference checks and submitted to criminal background checks through the Virginia State Policy and child abuse/neglect central registry checks through the Virginia Department of Social Services. Current infant, child and adult CPR and standard first aid certifications are held by each staff member.

Health Requirements for Staff

All staff members must be certified annually by a practicing physician to be free from any disability which would prevent them from caring for children. A TB test is required every two years.

Special Concerns

Special concerns (allergies/sensitivities to ANY substance, asthma, other health concerns, separation anxiety, physical, emotional, behavioral or developmental concerns, etc) should be brought to the Director's attention before the first class day.

Information from parents about their child is confidential and cannot be shared with other parents.

Registration

Application for admission to Harmony Preschool will be made by completing a registration form and hand delivering or mailing it, along with the **non-refundable** registration fee to the Director by 3:30 pm of the registration deadline date. Forms received after the deadline will be considered with the next group. All forms will be numbered upon arrival. If more forms are received for a particular class/time than there are spaces, then a lottery system will be implemented to determine class enrollment. The Director and at least 2 parent volunteers will be present when the numbers are drawn. The remaining forms will be placed on the waiting list for their first choice, and in the selection grouping for their second choice. Parents will be informed in writing or by phone of their child's status. The registration fee will be returned if the class requested is full or if the class is canceled due to lack of enrollment.

Registration deadlines will be established in the following order: 1 – Families presently enrolled in the program; 2 – Member of Harmony United Methodist Church; 3 – Alumni families; 4 – Open registration for all families.

Proof of Identity and Age

Effective July 1, 1998, in order to help identify missing children in regulated child day programs, the Virginia Department of Social Services requires persons enrolling a child in the program to provide information regarding the child's previous child care and school attendance, and to present proof of the child's identity and age. Proof of identity and age may include a certified copy of the child's birth certificate (a birth registration card is not considered a certified copy); notification of birth (hospital, physician, or midwife record); passport; school record from a public school in Virginia; or certification by a principal or his/her designee of a public school in the U.S. that a certified copy of the child's birth certificate was previously presented; a copy of the placement agreement or other proof of the child's identify form a child placing agency (foster care or adoption agencies); or a copy of the entrustment agreement conferring temporary legal custody of a child to an independent foster parent.

The following are NOT considered valid proofs of identity and age: a Xerox copy of a birth certificate; social security card; fingerprint card; custody papers; baptismal record; and the School Entrance Physical Examination and Immunization Certification form. Programs are not required to keep the proof of the child's identity, but documentation proving that this information was reviewed must be maintained for each child.

If the person enrolling the child does not provide the above mentioned information within 7 business days of the initial attendance, the regulated program must immediately notify the local law enforcement agency. The law enforcement agency will, if available information warrants, immediately submit an inquiry to the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse and, with the assistance of the local department of Social Services conduct the appropriate investigation to determine whether the child is missing. If your child was enrolled in Harmony Preschool in the previous school year, age has already been documented and it is not necessary to provide this information again.

Information about obtaining a certified copy of a birth certificate for a child born in Virginia is available by calling the Division of Vital Records at the Virginia Department of Health at 800-255-2414 or www.vitalchek.com.

Class Size

There will be a maximum of 12 children in a classroom. Each classroom will have a full-time teacher and teacher assistant. Each classroom is equipped with viewing windows for safety and observation.

Placement

Children will be placed in classes in accordance with their chronological age peers following public school guidelines. A child must be three years of age on or before December 31st to be enrolled in the Young three year old class; a child must be three years old on or before September 30th to be enrolled in the three year old class; a child must be four years old on or before September 30th to be enrolled in the four year old class; a child must be four years old on or before March 31st to be enrolled in the Pre-K class. The child's readiness to attend will be evaluated by the classroom teacher. After appropriate observation, evaluation, and consultation with the parents, a recommendation will be made with the approval of the Director that a child would be better placed by remaining with a younger class.

Facilities

Harmony Preschool is located at Harmony United Methodist Church, 380 E. Colonial Highway, Hamilton, Virginia. The Preschool uses classrooms located on the second floor of the church facility. All rooms have age appropriate furnishings, equipment and materials and observation windows. An outdoor fenced play area is located beside the church sanctuary. The facility meets all state health and fire safety requirements for regulated child day programs operated by a church.

All bathrooms, tables, chairs and toys are washed daily using a sanitizing solution recommended by the Health Department. Floors are vacuumed daily by staff members.

Due to fire regulations, only 10% of wall space can be covered by flammable materials such as paper. Other, more permanent pictures and charts on the walls have been sprayed with a flame retardant solution or laminated.

In order to provide maximum security for our students, all entry to the building is through the church office door. All other doors are locked for security reasons. Anyone entering

the building outside of pick up and drop off times should check in with the church secretary.

Health Records

Each child is required to have up-to-date immunization and health form on file prior to the beginning of the school year. A health form is sent to parents in the Enrollment packet. Parents are also required to sign an Emergency Medical Treatment form and Release form.

Chicken Pox Vaccine

Effective July 1, 1999, all children born on and after January 1, 1997 will be required to document having received at least once does of the varicella (chicken pox) vaccine. Parents who have decided not to have their child receive the vaccine at this time must submit a statement to this effect dated and signed by the child's physician.

Medications

Harmony Preschool has a Program's Decision Regarding Medication Plan in accordance with the Virginia Department of Social Services' child day program regulations. The program will administer prescription and non-prescription medications by all routes covered in the Medication Administration Training (MAT) course (oral, topical, eye, ear, patches, inhaled, medications and epinephrine via auto-injector device/epi-pen).

Only a staff member who has completed the appropriate training (MAT Course) and is listed as a medication administrator in the Program's Decision Regarding Medication Plan will be permitted to administer medications.

Medications/Epi-pens can be given to a child in Preschool only when a Permission to Administer Medication form has been completed by your child's physician and approved by the Director. Medications/Epi-pens must be sent to Preschool in its original container with the pharmacy directions label on the bottle.

Harmony Preschool's Program's Decision Regarding Medication Plan is available in the Preschool Office for parents' review.

Illnesses

Exclusion guidelines for child care centers include: a temperature of 100 or higher taken orally or 99 taken under the arm, diarrhea; serving coughing; labored or rapid breathing; vomiting; unusual spots or rashes; symptoms of a communicable disease-lice, pink eye, chicken pox, etc. The ill child will be removed from the class and allowed to rest and wait for an authorized person to pick him/her up. A staff member will wait with the child.

Simple health screenings will be done by the classroom teacher/assistant each day. The teacher/assistant will observe and scan the child from head to foot (no clothing will be touched during the screening). Conditions noted on the health sheet will include: runny nose, cough, tiredness, excessive energy, grouchiness, cries easily, bumps, bruises, cuts, frequent urination, itching, rashes, complaints of headaches, stomach aches, other pains, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, etc. Any child found to be ill or unable to participate fully in the day's activities will have his/her parent notified.

Communicable Disease Information

Parents should inform the Preschool if their child contracts a communicable disease (chicken pox, head lice, Fifth's disease, pink eye, etc) so that all parents can be informed and any precautionary measures can be taken to lessen the spread of the disease. Better protection for all (children and adults) results when ill children are kept home until they have completely recovered. It is not unusual for children attending Preschool for the first time to develop illnesses 5-6 times during the year. Children exposed to an ill child may attend Preschool as long as they do not have any symptoms of the illness. A description and health department guidelines of the most common childhood communicable diseases is available from the Preschool office.

The following are guidelines from a local pediatrician's office. When in doubt, contact your own doctor. **FEVER** – A child should not attend Preschool if they have a fever of 100 or higher taken orally or 99 taken under the arm. Fever over 104 is a sign of serious illness. Children with moderate fevers should be kept at home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours.

RUNNY NOSE – Each child should be able to blow his/her own nose and dispose of tissue properly. Frequent hand washing is also encouraged. Mucus that is thick and yellow or green is part of the natural process of the cold. A prolonged runny nose with thick mucus could be associated with an allergy and needs to be evaluated by a medical professional.

ANTIBIOTIC – A child taking an antibiotic may return to school after he/she has been on the medication for 24 hours and feels up to fully participating.

COUGHING – A child should cover his/her mouth by coughing into his/her bent elbow, NOT into their hand. By coughing into the elbow, germs are less likely to touch other objects and spread. Encourage frequent hand washing. If the child has a dry cough (barking dog) cough or a cough that is frequent and causes gagging or breathing difficulties should be evaluated by a medical professional.

VOMITING – Frequent vomiting needs medical attention. Sometimes a child will vomit just once for no apparent reason and then return to his/her normal activity level. The child may return to Preschool 24 hours after vomiting has ended if no other signs of illness are present.

DIARRHEA – Watery diarrhea more than twice in 24 hours needs medical attention. A child who is having accidents in his/her clothing needs to stay home so that he/she can be made comfortable and not feel embarrassed.

Transportation

Parents are responsible for bringing and picking up their child/children at Preschool. Carpools with other parents may be arranged. The teachers must be informed of all carpool arrangements and any other changes in transportation in writing. Teachers/Assistants are NOT permitted to transport children.

Parking Lot

Please use extreme care in the parking lot. Drivers should enter and exit at a “snail’s pace”, even when you are running late. Children should be under constant adult supervision in the parking lot. They should at all times hold the adult’s hand while walking on the sidewalk and when crossing the parking lot. Families are encouraged to socialize while still in the building instead of on the sidewalk or behind/between vehicles. Children should never be left unattended in a vehicle even for a brief time. Take turns with another parent watching siblings or ask the Director for help. It only takes a second for a tragedy to happen. Safety is our greatest concern.

Please use care when opening your vehicle’s doors. Parents with large SUV’s, vans, or trucks are requested to park in the back of the parking lot where there is more room.

Field Trips

During the year, there may be field trips to enhance your child's learning experiences. These trips will be limited to the local area (20 miles from Preschool or less). Parents will receive notice of the field trip (date, time, place, fees if any, appropriate clothing, activities planned, etc) at least one week before the trip date. Parents are responsible for transporting their own child to and from the field trip site and staying with their child or making arrangements with another family for transportation and supervision. Teachers/Assistants will meet parents and children at the field trip site. Families will not come to Preschool on field trip days, but instead go directly to the field trip destination. Parents should clarify the child safety seat/booster seat/safety belt law by calling 1-800-572-4510 for the Virginia State Police. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death in children 5-15 years of age. A study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration concluded that children are safest riding in the backseat.

Fire Drills

Monthly fire drills will be practiced following the fire evacuation plan developed through the Fire Marshal's office and documented on the Fire Drill Record Sheet. Smoke detectors will be checked monthly and new batteries installed twice a year. The church alarm/monitoring system will be checked and maintained in accordance with the contract (at least once a year).

Tuition and Supply Fees

The yearly tuition fees are divided into 9 equal monthly payments. Full payment is expected each month regardless of classes missed due to illness, vacation, weather or holidays as long as your child is enrolled. The tuition and fee schedule is determined by the Board each year.

Scholarships and Tuition Discounts

Full and partial scholarships are available for children who would benefit from the program, but whose family circumstances precludes participation if the full fee is charged. Applications for scholarships may be made at any time and will be reviewed by the Director and Minister only. All information will be kept confidential. For the 2011-

2012 school year, families with more than one child in the program are eligible for a 10% discount on the tuition fee of the lower rate.

Harmony Preschool Fundraising

Harmony Preschool is a ministry of Harmony United Methodist Church of Hamilton, VA, a qualified non-profit organization as defined by current state and federal tax regulations. Tuitions fees alone do not cover all of our yearly financial needs. The Preschool depends on fundraisers to meet our total expenses. A variety of fundraisers will be offered during the school year. Families are encouraged to participate in fundraising activities that are of interest to them, and not feel pressured to participate in everything.

Withdrawal

Should a parent need to withdraw a child at any time during the school year, 30 days written notice must be given to the Director stating the reason for the withdrawal. If the 30 day notice is not given, the parent(s) will be responsible for an additional month's tuition whether the child attends or not.

The teacher, with the approval of the Director, has the right to determine readiness to attend Preschool. Should a child need to be withdrawn for readiness reasons, reimbursement for the days the child does not attend will be made to the parent(s).

Inclement Weather Policy

The Preschool will follow the Loudoun County Public School (LCPS) announcements concerning school closings due to inclement weather. The Preschool is located in the Loudoun Valley High School (LVHS) cluster area. Announcements may be made concerning the entire school system (LCPS) or for just the cluster area (LVHS cluster). Please listen for both categories.

If LCPS/LVHS cluster are CLOSED, Preschool is CANCELED.

If LCPS/LVHS cluster open 2 hours late, **morning** Preschool is closed; **afternoon** Preschool is on regular schedule.

If LCPS/LVHS cluster open one 1 hour late, **morning** Preschools opens at 9:30; **afternoon** Preschool is on regular schedule.

If LCPS/LVHS cluster dismisses early, **morning** classes are on regular schedule; **afternoon** classes are CANCELED.

Parents are urged to use their best judgment in deciding whether to bring their child to Preschool or to pick him/her up early in inclement weather conditions.

Harmony Preschool reserves the right to decide to close Preschool in case of late breaking weather conditions. A message will be available on the Preschool phone number – 540-338-0510.

“Shelter in Place” Plan

Harmony Preschool has established an emergency response plan to assure that your child and our staff are as safe as possible while they are at school. The LCPS system’s security manager Mr. Robert Burke was contacted to gain information on their current plan and how we can use their expertise in establishing our own plan.

The latest update to the school system’s Emergency Response Plan is the concept “Shelter in Place”. Although it is new to this area, such plans have been successfully used throughout the country for decades to protect schools and communities from chemical accidents. “Shelter in Place” is basically a procedure designed to seal off a building from the outside environment for a limited time (a few hours; not a few days) if there is a chemical threat.

If a dangerous airborne agent were released in the community and posed a threat to students during the Preschool day, we would remain inside, shut down all heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, and close and secure all windows and doors. The neutral atmospheric pressure created by these actions would keep chemical agents from leaking into the building. We will go to an interiors area without windows upstairs (an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed). These same procedures can also be used at home.

During a “Shelter in Place” procedure, the building would be secured (locked) and **NO ONE** (not even a parent) would be allowed to enter or leave until the all-clear signal had been given. Signs will be placed on the entrance doors to notify parents that we are in a “Shelter in Place” mode. Parents should also protect themselves in this type of emergency by remaining sheltered in their homes or places of work.

We will follow LCPS's decision to begin and end the "Shelter in Place" procedure. Parents should listen to local TV and radio stations, the NOAA weather alert station, or go to the LCPS website, www.lcps.org for information. The Preschool has a battery operated NOAA weather alert radio that we may begin our plan as soon as possible. We have also purchased a cell phone that you may use to contact us during the plan. This cell phone is for emergency use ONLY. For all other calls, parents should use the main number, 540-338-0510.

Harmony Preschool Cell Phone Number: XXXXXXXX

In the event of a "Shelter in Place" procedure, the children will be told that we are going to do Centers upstairs. They will bring their coats and backpacks upstairs with them to play. We have assembled a variety of fun things to do. We will try to have as "normal" a day as possible. Our teachers will be there for your child to comfort them, cuddle them, and reassure them that everything is going to be fine and that you are fine and will be coming soon. We also have water, food, flashlights, a first aid kit, a change of clothes, weather alert radio, and emergency information for each child. Parents may want to put in their child's backpack a favorite blanket or "lovey" (a favorite item that would be comforting for your child to have with him/her), and for those that need them, extra pull-ups. Children who take medication/inhalers on a regular basis outside of Preschool time should bring a day's worth to be kept at Preschool. (Medications must be in their original prescription bottle with printed directions and we must have a signed doctor's form).

Behavior Management

The goal of behavior management is to help the child learn self-control and build good habits. The staff will help children learn self-control by promoting self-esteem and self-image through use of techniques such as: reinforcing acceptable behavior, ignoring unacceptable behavior, offering choices, redirecting behavior to acceptable activities, setting limits, and learning to express feelings with words instead of actions. Each class will establish limits that are fair, appropriate to the age, can be consistently applied, and understandable to the children. Limits will be presented using pictures and role playing. Acceptable behavior includes cooperating, listening, sharing, taking turns, playing together, helping, talking about problems. If a child forgets an appropriate behavior, the teacher/assistant will use one of the techniques above to help the child regain self-control.

Because our program is based upon the Learning Centers approach and offers many opportunities for children to choose an activity that interest them, it is very rare that other management techniques are needed. On occasions when it is necessary, the 1.2.3. Magic program designed by Dr. Thomas Phelan may be used. This program

provides a fair, very clear, and kind/calm manner for handling a child's difficult behavior and encouraging good behavior. The child is given three opportunities to change his/her behavior. The first time, he/she hears "That's one." The second time "That's two." The third time "That's three. Take five." The child is asked to leave the activity or group for 3 minutes. A sand egg timer will be used to visually represent the time for the child. At the end of the three minutes, the child will be notified that the time is up and he/she may rejoin the group or activity. The child is always welcomed back to the group. The 1.2.3 Magic video and book are available for parents to borrow. A program that is used both at home and at school provides the child with continuity and a feeling of stability which promotes a positive self-image.

If a child begins to have problems interacting with others or being destructive of property on a consistent basis for three days, the parents will be informed of the problem. A log will be kept to document the problem and to help determine what happens before and after the behavior occurs. The Teacher, Director and Parents will work together to determine the cause of the behavior and to establish a behavior system that helps the child. Systems used may include, but are not limited to, high levels of positive reinforcement, token reward systems, and rearranging the classroom or schedule to better fit the child's needs. Professionals from the community will also be used as resources. The staff will work with professionals consulted by the parents to implement a behavior program and provide input.

Harmony Preschool reserves the right to ask that a child be withdrawn from the program if it is deemed through observation and documentation that the child presents a danger to him/herself and/or others. This will result after two behavior programs have been tried with no significant improvement in the child's behavior; professional help has been turned down by the parents; or serious injury results to the child or others.

Worship

Pastor Steve Vineyard, the Minister of Harmony United Methodist Church, has graciously agreed to offer a brief (about 10 minutes) children's story time once a week in the church Sanctuary. The story time will include a Bible story, finger plays, songs and stories about the weekly chapel story or everyday experiences.

Holidays

Harmony Preschool will observe the Christian Liturgical Calendar. We would like to bring a better understanding of the reasons for our holidays and special celebrations. We will focus on the Christian origins of special days and avoid much of the commercialism that precedes these special days. For example, at Christmas we will focus on Baby Jesus' birthday instead of Santa and the reindeer.

Snacks

Snacks are provided by parents on a rotating basis. Any leftover food or drink will be returned to the parent at the end of the day. The Preschool has use of the fully equipped church kitchen for the refrigeration and storage of snack items.

Each family is responsible for providing snack for the entire class and teachers on a rotating basis. A snack schedule is provided monthly. **If your child is allergic or sensitive to any food, please let the Director know.**

*****Harmony Preschool strives to be a PEANUT, PEANUT BUTTER, TREE NUT FREE environment. These foods should never be brought into the building.*****

Dress Requirements

Children should come dressed to play in clothing that is comfortable, washable and that promotes safety and independence. Please do not send your child to Preschool in clothing or shoes that should not get dirty. Children will be going outside when the weather permits (even on cold days for a breath of fresh air), so be sure to send your child dressed for the weather of the day (appropriate coat, hat, gloves/mittens, long pants or thick stockings under dresses for the girls). Girls should wear shorts or stockings under dresses in warm weather. Children are urged to wear sneakers to Preschool for safety on the playground and on the tile floors and stairs.

No flip flops/clogs/Crocs please

Accidents can happen to any of us – please provide a complete change of clothes (socks, underwear, shirt and long pants) in a zip lock bag marked with your child's name. These clothes will be left at Preschool until used or the school year ends.