



**A Ministry of Steele Creek
Presbyterian Church at Pleasant Hill**

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Parent Handbook

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Dear Pleasant Hill Preschool Parents,

On behalf of myself and the staff, I would like to say "Thank you" for choosing Pleasant Hill Preschool as your child's preschool. A great preschool education has become the cornerstone to beginning a child's educational path. The care and trust you have placed in the Pleasant Hill Preschool staff does not go unnoticed. Your child will benefit greatly from the expertise of well-trained teaching professionals and the strong foundation of a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Each year, we are presented with many challenges, but the caring and compassion for young children will always be paramount. And now, with your child as a member of the PHP family, he/she will receive a strong church-based education. Please take the time to read and understand the Pleasant Hill Preschool Parent Handbook very carefully. Please make sure you familiarize yourself with the school's policies. As always should you ever have a question, please feel free to contact me or one of our staff, and we will take the time to meet with you and address any issues or concerns you may have. Once again, I would like to thank you for trusting us to love and educate your child at Pleasant Hill Preschool. We look forward to a wonderful year together!

Best Regards,

*Cait Osipower
Director*

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The Program

A preschool program housed in a church is expected to reflect the highest values and the best of care. In the church we have the opportunity to offer the finest in early childhood education and to direct attention to the Christian faith through value-based education.

Through value-based education, we recognize the importance of adults as role models of acceptable behavior for children. Adults reflect faith in God through the words they use and the way they relate to each child. Children begin to pattern their own ways of acting and reacting to others based on their role models, which include their teachers and their parents.

Through value-based education, we affirm each child's worth. We recognize and celebrate each child's joys and accomplishments. We explore the meaning of living together. We teach that each person has rights and that we value and respect the rights of others.

Through value-based education, we see the world as good. We marvel at creation and teach caring for our planet and all living things. We name the children's actions so they begin to know what sharing, love, and kindness means.

As in all quality preschool programs, we maintain the following beliefs about children:

- Learning is fun and play is the work of children
- The early years are optimal learning years
- Each child develops at his/her own individual rate
- Quality preschool programs have positive effects on children
- Children who feel good about themselves have a better learning experience

Pleasant Hill Preschool Philosophy

Recognizing that a preschool experience is the child's first step into the world beyond the family, we strive to be accepting of a child as a unique individual, aware of his/her emotional and educational needs, and to provide a loving and supportive environment. Within this context, it is our goal to provide challenging new experiences, opportunities to build relationships with other children and adults, and a rich variety of activities leading to mastery of appropriate skills and overall school readiness. At Pleasant Hill Preschool it is our aim to provide the environment for optimal growth within a developmentally appropriate framework. We are committed to allowing each child the opportunity to learn at his/her own level and to experience success as mastery advances. It is our job to create the finest environment in which this can happen.

Children are actively involved in learning at their own pace in a neat, organized classroom. They will follow a daily routine guided by knowledgeable and nurturing staff members. Our teachers are professionals who are dedicated, caring and trained in Early Childhood Development. The Director is also experienced in meeting the needs of your child, communicating with parents, and management. All members of our staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. All staff participates in in-service training and education in order to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of families and the current findings of early childhood education.

The teachers are committed to working with the children in small groups. This allows them to work closely with each child. This is the only way to not neglect the needs of any child. The classes are very busy and packed full of a wide and comprehensive variety of activities. The teachers do not in any way pressure or force a child. They share with the children lots of exciting things, and the children catch what they are ready for. This is a wholesome approach to preschool learning. The teachers are thrilled with all the things the children learn. The most important thing to the preschool is the way the children feel about themselves and the way they treat each other. The teachers work very hard to share positive attitudes with the children. This remains constant with each child's plan.

Goals of the Pleasant Hill Preschool Program

We believe that all children share certain needs, both physical and emotional. In addition to providing a safe and healthy environment, children need to be loved, to feel special, to learn to trust, to develop a sense of who they are and to learn how to share and cooperate with other people.

Our goals are:

To develop the child's confidence and self-esteem so that they feel good about themselves and what they are able to do.

To help the children feel very good about being a part of the Pleasant Hill Preschool family.

To challenge the child's creativity.

To encourage the child's curiosity.

To realize that all that we have is a gift from God and that we must do our part to take care of each other and His world.

To learn to treat others with respect and kindness.

To work on many preschool skills, i.e., letters, colors, numbers, cutting, coloring, zipping, tying, etc.

To sing, laugh, share, and enjoy being in a Christian community.

To nurture in children a love of learning, a respect for one another and a joy for life.

To encourage parent involvement in their children's education.

To build friendship among children and families.

To build lifelong links among children, family, community and God.

To remain affordable for all families who believe in the cooperative approach.

These goals seem broad and all encompassing. But they have been carefully considered in the curriculum and in daily plans.

As we work on a theme-based curriculum, each week there is a special theme that will be introduced and the children will work on various skills within this framework. Our goal is to foster lifelong learners that will begin school with confidence.

Meeting Our Goals

Religious Concepts: In the Gospel, Jesus declares, “Let the little children come to me, do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs”.

Steele Creek Presbyterian Church at Pleasant Hill understands that a significant part of its ministry is to enable parents to provide for the spiritual growth and nurture of their children. Through our preschool program each child is encouraged to worship God, to practice prayer, to show respect in the Sanctuary, and to see the need to treat others as equals in God’s sight. The Pastor of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church at Pleasant Hill along with the Director of Community Faith Formation assist the teachers in sharing Bible stories and providing chapel time to the children.

Education: The classroom program is built on activities designed to encourage intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. Students learn how to participate in groups, how to cooperate, and how to share. They are guided gently towards greater independence, creativity and responsibility in all areas of life. Classroom activities include:

- Teacher-led lessons and discussions
- Story reading and story telling
- Dramatic play
- Pre-math and pre-reading activities
- Music and dance
- Supervised free play
- Large and small motor activities
- Outdoor play

Classroom time is augmented by special activities that provide students with new experiences and help them learn about group behavior and respect for the world around them. Special activities include in-house field trips; holiday parties; visits from local officials; and programs put on by the children themselves.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement in a child's education is critical to children's success. We realize that many parents are pressed for time. Therefore, we offer a variety of opportunities for parents to tailor their participation to the needs of their family and child. For most parents, aiding is not an obligation but a pleasure and an opportunity. It is a chance to watch one's child bloom in a new environment and to gain an experienced teacher's insight into the child's development.

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled once a year at the end of the school year to provide a time for teachers to report on each child's progress. Parents are encouraged to speak to the teacher at any time about the concerns or important events in their child's life.

A monthly parent newsletter is produced for each classroom by the teacher. This newsletter helps parents to stay informed about what is happening in their child's class and in the program as a whole. In addition, weekly emails will be sent from the Director informing families of upcoming events and important information related to the preschool.

Fundraising and after school events are planned throughout the school year. A scholarship program and some physical improvements are funded through fundraising efforts. These events also give us a chance to grow in fellowship and strengthen our school community.

Pleasant Hill Preschool Council

The Preschool Council consists of representatives from the church, parents, and staff. These individuals set policies and guidelines for the preschool under the advisement of the Preschool Director. Some of the duties of the Council include making decisions regarding school-wide policy, monitoring financial status of the preschool and making decisions regarding spending, as well as being a liaison for the teachers to the preschool and church governing bodies. They also coordinate and facilitate the preschool functions such as fundraisers, staff appreciation, and the end of year celebration, to name a few. If interested in participating on the Preschool Council, a formal application is required. These are available in the Preschool office. If there are openings, the application is submitted to a vote by the council minus the Preschool Director. Council members may serve a maximum term of four consecutive years, with a year off between terms. A list of committee members may be obtained in the preschool office.

Admissions Policy

Pleasant Hill Preschool is open to all children who may benefit from our type of program. Admission is based on the order in which applications are received, with the following priorities:

1. Students presently enrolled in the program
2. Siblings of children presently enrolled
3. Members of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church at Pleasant Hill & Preschool Alumni Families
4. New applications

To be eligible for the Toddler, Two, Three and Four Year Old Classes, a child must be that age on or before September 1st of that school year.

Inclusion

Pleasant Hill Preschool believes that all children are created by God and are special. Therefore, our preschool program is open to children with different abilities and all ethnic backgrounds.

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the school upon application, or at other appropriate times, of any health conditions, special needs, developmental delays, and/or allergies, etc. so we can provide appropriate care. When a child with identified special needs applies for enrollment, the Director will gather information from the parents/guardians related to the child's development and special needs. Relevant evaluations from professionals may be requested. After consultations with the child's parents, preschool teachers and other appropriate persons, a determination will be made as to whether or not the child's needs can be met by Pleasant Hill Preschool. Factors to be considered will include at least the following:

- The adequacy of the facilities
- The needs of the child as they relate to the amount of time needed by the staff
- The impact of the child's needs on the daily schedule/routine
- Professional evaluations and recommendations

Observations and informal evaluations will occur for the first two full weeks of school, which will include input from the child's parents, his/her teachers, and the Director. Enrollment and/or continued placement of a child with special needs will be determined by factors which include severity of the child's condition, the type and amount of care needed, and any necessary precautions or adjustments to the preschool's program. If it is determined that Pleasant Hill Preschool cannot meet a child's needs, the parent will be notified and asked to locate a program better suited for the child's needs.

Registration

Registration for each new school year will begin in March. A completed online application and a **Non-Refundable** registration fee must be received in order to secure a position for the following year. September's tuition is due on August 20 for the upcoming school year in order to maintain your child's spot. September's tuition is also non-refundable.

Tuition

Tuition for the 2023-2024 school year is listed as follows:

3 Days (Tuesday – Thursday)	\$320.00/month
4 Days (Monday – Thursday)	\$360.00/month
5 Days (Monday - Friday)	\$400.00/month

Tuition is an annual amount broken down into nine equal installments to ensure ease of payment. Tuition must be paid in full regardless of absenteeism, vacation, school closures or any other events beyond the control of the preschool. Snow days and school closures will not be made up and tuition will not be refunded for those days. All tuition will be collected through a direct ACH or credit/debit charge and batched by the preschool. Cash or check payments are no longer accepted for tuition. Tuition will be auto-drafted the 20th of each month. A fee of \$25.00 will be charged for any payments that did not go through the system. A 10% discount will be applied if tuition is paid in full at the beginning of the school year. Sibling and church member discounts are available to those who qualify. If payments fall a month behind due to insufficient funds or incorrect payment information, Pleasant Hill Preschool reserves the right to suspend the child from the preschool unless arrangements for payment are made.

Termination

If a child is having difficulty in Pleasant Hill Preschool, a plan of action will be developed and followed after consultation with the child's teacher(s), the Director, and the parents of the child(ren) involved in the preschool.

Termination is rare, but can occur for any reason listed below:

- Failure to pay tuition or consistently late with tuition.
- Refusal to cooperate with school policies and procedures by parent or child.
- Child disruptive to the point of being a detriment to the other children.
- Any problem that has been discussed with the Director and continues to work against the good of the school, the child, and other children.

Withdrawals

Tuition and registration fees are non-refundable. The Director must be notified one month in advance of the withdrawal of a child. Tuition will be required for any month in which your child has attended preschool for one or more days.

Adjustment to Preschool

A child with a strong, healthy attachment to his/her primary caregiver often needs gradual weaning to make the transition to preschool. On the way to preschool in the morning, talk about the exciting things your child will be doing during the day and the fun you will have together when you pick them up.

Depending on the ages and stages of development, some children may “act out” their feelings in one or more of the following ways:

- Clinging to you and refusing to let you go
- Having a tantrum
- Forgetting their toilet training
- Not eating
- Waking up at night and/or having bad dreams
- Thumb sucking
- Bedwetting
- Expressing a desire to stay home rather than coming to preschool

Usually these problems are only temporary. If your child is treated lovingly, but firmly by you and the staff, this behavior usually passes quickly. If parents and significant others in the child’s life are enthusiastic and happy about the program, it is almost certain that your child will be content and happy to participate in everyday activities.

Arrival, Dismissal, and Late Pick-up Fee Policy

Arrival: Drop-off will be done through carline for all classes. Arrival and dismissal times will be assigned based on class. Any children who arrive after 9:05 am will need to be walked to the preschool entrance where they will then be escorted to class by a staff member.

Dismissal: Pick-up will be done through carline on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. On Wednesdays we will dismiss from Chapel and on Thursdays dismissal will be from the classroom. On Wednesdays and Thursdays you will be required to park and walk into the building to pick up your child(ren). Children will be released to authorized persons only. If you are going to be detained, please notify the school immediately so that we may reassure your child. Any parent that has not picked up their child by 1:10 pm will be considered late. A fee of \$5.00 for the first five minutes and \$1.00 a minute thereafter will be charged. This fee will be applied to your child’s next tuition invoice. Teachers are expected to clean their rooms and prepare for the next day after the children depart.

Needing to watch a child while waiting for a parent keeps the teachers from their classroom duties.

Carline

Carline procedures will be distributed by the preschool at the start of the year. Cellphone usage is prohibited during carline. All children must have a car seat. Please remain in your car during morning drop-off. Your child will be assisted into and out of your car by one of their teachers, the Director, or Assistant Director. During dismissal you will need to buckle your child(ren). Please utilize our buckle zones if you need additional time buckling. Stay in car line and move with the flow of traffic. Do not go around other vehicles in line. Car tags will be issued by the school and need to remain visible during carline.

School Closings and Holidays

Pleasant Hill Preschool will observe most of the same holidays as Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and Clover School District. When bad weather occurs, we will use decisions from surrounding schools as a guide. In the event of inclement weather, you will be notified via email if our preschool decides to close. This information will also be posted to our Facebook page. If public school is delayed one hour or more, our school will usually be closed or delayed based on road conditions and the weather forecast. Delays are not guaranteed and are at the discretion of the Director. **We will not make up any days taken for bad weather, nor is tuition refunded for school closures.**

Allergies

Allergies and/or allergic reactions to food, insect bites or stings, etc. must be documented by a physician on each child's application form prior to enrollment in the preschool program. The child's parent or guardian is responsible for providing necessary information and instructions that should be followed if an allergic reaction occurs. This includes the provision of an Epi-pen or Auvi-Q, if required. An Allergy Action Form will be kept in the child's folder in the preschool office and posted clearly in the classroom.

Allergy restrictions will be based on a classroom as needed basis. If a severe food allergy is present, the parents of the children in that specific class will be notified and instructed on any restrictions.

Accidents

In case of minor injuries, first aid will be given at school by trained staff. All staff members are First Aid and CPR certified. In more serious injuries or illness, parents, or if needed, the emergency contact will be notified as soon as possible after assessing and stabilizing the medical needs of the child. If they are unavailable, the Director or designated teacher will make the decision for treatment based on her evaluation of your child, and may call the paramedics. An accident/incident form will also be completed, signed by a teacher with a copy placed in the child's file and a copy sent home in the child's folder.

Sick Policy

Much of the success of the health of your child rests on parents' cooperation. Please do not send a child to school that shows signs of illness, or give them fever-reducing medicine and send them to school. For the protection of all the children and staff, and for the comfort of your child, we ask that children be kept home if they seem ill.

Signs of illness include:

- Fever over 100.0 °F when taken by mouth
- A cold that is more than four days old
- Significant cold symptoms, such as heavy, thick runny nose, severe cough, difficulty breathing, and fatigue
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or an upset stomach
- Undiagnosed rash or skin irritation
- Eyes that are red or have a discharge
- Needs to stay indoors- We cannot leave a child unsupervised while the remainder of the class goes outside.
- Symptoms of a possible communicable disease. Please report any communicable diseases to the Director immediately.

Because children often relapse after seeming to recover from an illness, children must be kept home the next consecutive school day after being sent home and until they are free of any of the listed symptoms for 24 hours. The child must be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours before he/she can return to class.

Please do not medicate your child in the morning and send them to school. This continues to spread the illness and does not allow your child the proper time to rest and recover. Medications for children will only be administered by the child's parents or legal guardians.

A daily health assessment will be given to each child by his/her teacher upon arrival. Children who come to school exhibiting symptoms will be sent home immediately. If a child is continually sent to school ill they will be terminated from the program for refusing to cooperate with school policies. A child may be sent home if any symptoms of illness appear during the school day. In such cases, your child will be removed from the classroom and brought to the Director's office until they can be picked up.

Potty-Training

All children entering a 3- or 4-year-old classroom must be fully potty trained and wear underwear to school. Pull Ups are not allowed in the 3's and 4's classrooms. When a student has experienced three occurrences of potty accidents in one week, the student will be asked to stay home for a 1-week period to reinforce training. This policy goes into effect on week 4. If there is no progress after 2 months, the preschool reserves the right to withdraw the student.

If a student has a written letter from a pediatrician stating a medical or behavioral reason for a potty-training delay, the preschool will determine if we can adequately serve the student and their needs. This must be presented prior to the beginning of the school year so a determination can be made.

Attire

Please dress your child in clothing that is free of complicated fastenings so he/she can manage easily for his or her bathroom needs. To account for weather changes, we advise you to dress your child in easily removable layers. Remember that your child will enjoy a busy and possibly dirty day at Pleasant Hill Preschool, so dress accordingly. Please label your child's possessions. For your child's safety and comfort, we recommend shoes that are comfortable for running and playing. Rubber soled shoes and sneakers are recommended, especially for Playball on Thursdays.

We go outside unless it is raining or colder than 32 degrees; please send your child dressed appropriately for the weather conditions that day.

What To Send With Your Child

Children will need at least one complete change of clothes in his/her classroom at all times that are seasonally appropriate. Please include underwear, pants, shirt and socks. Soiled clothing should be taken home and replaced with a clean/fresh set the next day of attendance. Children who are not potty trained must provide diapers or pullups along with their change of clothes.

What NOT to Send With Your Child

So your child will not be disappointed with a broken or a lost toy, it is better if your child plays with the toys provided at Pleasant Hill Preschool. Please leave all toys at home, or in your car, unless notified of a special occasion where your children should bring in a toy. Teachers will notify you if/when children can bring a toy that relates to the theme of study or for "Show and Tell".

Lunch and Snack

Children are required to bring a small snack, lunch, and water bottle to school each day. Please make sure to label these items. A teacher will assist your child with their lunches each day, as needed. Please be sure to send food that your children can easily manage themselves. The children will be encouraged to eat the main part of their lunch first and save any treats for last. Any uneaten portion, within reason, will be repacked in the lunchbox and returned home with your child. Please also do not send carbonated drinks or drinks that are held in glass containers with their lunch. These items will be placed back in your child's lunch box and sent home.

For classrooms where there is a child with a severe allergy, parents in the classroom will be made aware of any food restrictions which will apply to all packed lunches and snacks. Our teachers are very diligent when checking food items, but we need your help to keep our kids safe.

Birthdays

While birthday parties and gifts are not allowed at preschool, birthdays are special and should be celebrated. The preschool offers a birthday celebration package that will include everything needed for your child's birthday celebration. An order form will need to be completed and returned prior to your child's birthday. Please contact the office to obtain an order form. If you do not wish to purchase a birthday package from the school, you may send in a birthday treat that is store bought and unopened. All birthday treats from home must adhere to the classroom's dietary restrictions, if applicable, and be provided to the teachers either the day before or during drop-off the morning of.

Pleasant Hill Preschool Classroom Discipline Philosophy

As a team, the teachers at Pleasant Hill Preschool believe that consistent discipline is the key to maintaining a productive classroom environment. We want to teach our students to express their feelings and solve problems in an appropriate way, no matter what their age. The best way to do this, we believe, is to set clear limits of expected behavior from the time that the children enter our classrooms.

Our school uses a program called Green and Red Choices. It is a positive approach to behavior and a universal support for all children in the classroom to teach them the expected behaviors.

Green choices are good behaviors, worded in a positive way. They are the choices we want students to make such as listen, use kind words, and have a calm body. Green is a symbol for go, keep going and red is a symbol for stop. Using positive language goes a long way! It builds a caring community where students feel loved and safe so they are able to learn and grow!

We teach green choices (aka expected behaviors) through books and activities all year long. Making green choices is hard! Each behavior is paired with a visual support. Many of our classrooms have a Green and Red Choices Chart for visual support in our classroom.

Green and red choices focus on the choice rather than the child. If a child makes a red choice, a teacher or another student may point it out quietly or simply ask if that's a green choice. The child can change their behavior and make a green choice.

Try using positive, green choice language at home!

Say ...

- Walking feet
- Inside voice
- Hands to yourself
- Let's work as a team
- Use kind words
- Put it in the trash/recycle can
- Can you share or trade?
- Is that a green choice?
- You look upset. Can I help you?

Instead of ...

- No running
- No yelling
- No pushing
- Stop fighting about it
- Stop saying mean things
- Stop throwing it on the ground
- Don't take that toy
- Why are you doing that?!
- Stop the tantrum

In the event a child has used excessive or repeated force or violence, they will be sent home immediately. If a child is consistently making red choices a parent/teacher conference will be requested. We believe that we are partners with parents in their children's education and often, family input will help provide more consistency for the children. Based on the severity and number of incidents, a child can be terminated from the program.

Biting Policy

Pleasant Hill Preschool recognizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when young children are in a group setting. We are always upset when children are bitten in our preschool and we recognize how upsetting such an incident is for parents. While we feel that biting is never the right thing for toddlers to do, we know that they bite for a variety of reasons.

A child biting in the classroom is a serious matter. Our staff works to keep children safe and to help the child who bites to learn different and appropriate behavior. After the first offensive, the child will be sent home immediately if he/she bites again. If the biting continues, we will develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques, and a timeline to address the situation. If it is determined that Pleasant Hill Preschool is unable to meet the child's needs, the parents will be notified of this decision and the child will be terminated from the program.

Biting is always documented on our standard incident/accident report form. It is completed and signed by the teacher who witnessed the incident. A copy of this form is given to the parents and another copy is placed in the child's file in the preschool office. Immediate attention and, if necessary, first aid is always given to the child bitten. When children are bitten, their parents are informed personally and given a written copy of the incident report. The name of the child who did the biting is always kept confidential.

Is Your Child Ready For Kindergarten?

Children learn and grow at an individual pace. On occasion, a child may not be ready for kindergarten because he/she is immature physically, socially, emotionally, or cognitively. Referral for an extra year of preschool is made by the teacher with input from the Director, and possibly other Preschool staff. This referral will not be based solely on cognitive assessment. Equally important and critical to the child's success in elementary school is his/her:

Ability to feel emotionally secure

Ability to socially interact with other individuals in the classroom

Ability to have the physical stamina to function for the duration of the school day

Pleasant Hill Preschool teachers will consider all these factors when making individual recommendations for kindergarten. At the beginning of the school year, teachers will record the individual needs of children in their classes and work accordingly to meet those needs. Parents will be updated of their child's progress throughout the year. Parents will have the opportunity to schedule an in-person conference in May.

School Safety

At Pleasant Hill Preschool, the safety of your child and our staff is our top priority. During the beginning of the school year, and throughout the year, we practice fire, tornado and lockdown drills. We want everyone to be prepared in the event of a true emergency.

With two CMS schools nearby, we will be working in conjunction with their principal and staff, as well as the CMPD, to be on alert in the event of a lockdown at Palisades Park Elementary School or Palisades High School. If either school is put on lockdown, for any reason whether it be police activity in the area or something happening at the school, we will also be on lockdown. Only emergency responders will be allowed to enter or exit the preschool building. As we want to make sure our first responders are able to do their jobs without additional traffic in the area, we ask that you stay home until such time as you hear that we have been cleared by CMPD to re-open. We also want you, the parents, to be safe! We will inform parents via email with a message letting you know that we have been told by CMPD that our area is safe and when you can pick up your child.

In the event of a fire, tornado or other weather-related event, we will do our best to stay in communication with you once we know our staff and children are safe. If a true emergency were to happen, please know we will do everything we can to keep our precious little ones out of harm's way.

In Closing

Thank you for taking the time to read through our policies and procedures. We are looking forward to a great year full of love and learning! We are always here if you have any questions or concerns.