

# St. Stephen's UMC Preschool



## Parent Handbook

**St. Stephen's United Methodist Church Preschool**

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# St. Stephen's United Methodist Church Preschool

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## **APPROACH**

Since 1969 St. Stephen's UMC Preschool has endeavored to meet the needs of the community. At St. Stephen's we are committed to providing a safe, warm, and engaging environment that values the uniqueness of every child. Although the dynamic in each classroom varies to reflect the ages of children, the children's interests, and the teacher's style, a basic philosophy remains constant throughout our program. At St. Stephen's we aspire to meet and exceed the developmental needs of all children in our care. Every effort is made to ensure that each child has the opportunity to develop to their full potential in every developmental domain. We utilize scaffolding and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learning styles and varied developmental levels. We also utilize a variety of play-based curriculums and child guided approaches to create a learning environment that is engaging, stimulating, and fun. At St. Stephen's we are committed to setting children up for success and with a love of learning.

Thank you for choosing St. Stephen's UMC Preschool. We look forward to experiencing much fun, laughter, and learning with you and your children.

### **Philosophy and Goals**

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St. Stephen's United Methodist Church Preschool is committed to providing the best possible environment for nurturing young children's total growth and development: a place where children experience structured freedom, personal acceptance, and guidance from loving teachers. One of our basic human needs is to know, accept, and enjoy our individuality. Therefore, an important preschool objective is to provide an environment where children can develop as individuals, acquire a love of learning, and gain a realistic concept of self and personal worth. This positive self-awareness enables children to freely develop intellectually and emotionally. Since children learn more effectively through trusting positive relationships and creative explorative play, the task of staff and teachers is to help all children acquire and refine useful behavior patterns and a sense of wonder which will lead them toward becoming productive, creative adults.

We encourage a balanced growth by placing equal emphasis on physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. Our prime objectives are to:

- Enhance development of individuality, independence, and self-confidence
- Provide appropriate opportunities for socialization
- Guide experiences in practical living
- Promote physical development
- Stimulate intellectual development
- Provide a solid foundation for faith development

The overall program is aimed at fostering a balanced growth for each child in each of these major developmental dimensions:

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### **Physical**

Through play children begin to understand their bodies and how they work. By using crayons, scissors, clay, paint, glue, blocks, woodworking, musical instruments and manipulative toys, children develop small muscle/fine motor skills. Creative movement, climbing gyms, balls, bikes, and slides help children develop large muscles/gross motor skills and improve coordination, balance, and strength.

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### **Social**

A young child's first lesson in community living is learning about belonging to a group. Within the group, a child learns to share, take turns, give and receive help, and to follow as well as lead. Children learn to express their needs verbally and to listen while others talk; to feel secure with adults and share their attention with peers. They are encouraged to be self-reliant by learning to take care of personal needs, to finish what is begun, and to clean up and put away materials.

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### **Emotional**

Teachers help a child feel wanted, loved and secure by providing structured freedom in this first school experience. They encourage a child's independence and individuality by providing many media through which a child can constructively express feelings, manage personal needs, and develop problem-solving abilities. A supportive environment that fosters creativity at many levels and respects individual differences reinforces emotional health and stability.

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### **Intellectual**

Stories, finger plays, poems, dramatic play, music, science, nature, cooking experiences, games, and puzzles stimulate a child's intellectual development in every dimension. These experiences strengthen concentration, observation, and memory; encourage curiosity, reasoning, and a desire to learn; and provide a rich backdrop for development of essential language skills.

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### **Curriculum**

Our Curriculum is designed to:

- use play to encourage children to explore, expand abilities, follow directions, sequence steps and develop age appropriate skills
- provide routine to give children security and teach organizational skills
- promote positive verbal, physical and social interaction with peers
- encourage use and coordination of the whole body and all the senses
- provide a variety of open-ended activities which promote independence and creativity
- to build a sense of community and respect for all living things
- prepare children with the necessary skills to make the transition from preschool to elementary school

## **The Value of Play**

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Our program is founded on the belief that play is the most developmentally appropriate and productive avenue for young children's learning. It is the preschooler's way of exploring the physical world; of relating to others; of organizing ideas, knowledge, and feelings; of adjusting to the demands of the environment; of releasing tensions and solving emotional problems. Because true play is inherently individual and has no pre-determined expectations, there can be no "failure" in play. Each child is free to succeed at self-chosen tasks, and this success leads to feelings of competence, self-worth, and willingness to try new things.

Every area of development is enhanced through self-directed play. Through play children develop physical skills and coordination of large and small muscles. They explore objects and materials and discover what can be done with them. They practice skills useful to later school learning: visual discrimination, recognition of patterns, refined hand and eye movements, etc. In stacking and building with blocks, children learn about spatial relationships, balance, weight, and gravity. In sand and water play, they explore concepts of volume, weight, and comparison. During dramatic play, children practice social roles, develop communication skills, and expand their understanding of their own and others' feelings. At a time when language ability is insufficient to fully convey feelings and frustrations, play provides an effective avenue for self-expression.

Perhaps most importantly of all, children discover their own personality in play and develop confidence in their own ability to deal with the world around them. Play has all the characteristics of a complete educational process. It secures concentration for a great length of time. It develops initiative, imagination, and intense interest. There is complete emotional involvement. No other activity calls so fully on the resources of effort and energy within each child. Play is the most complete of all the educational processes, for it influences the intellect, the emotions, and the body of the child.

## **Discipline**

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Successful classroom discipline begins with clear and consistent expectations, boundaries and routines. Effective discipline strategies promote self-control, teach responsibility, and help children make thoughtful choices. It is vital that the child's self-esteem and dignity are preserved. Every child is unique so we may have to try a variety of strategies for different children. Creativity and patience are vital in creating a successful discipline strategy. It is also vital that you have a clear understanding of each child's developmental level. One of our main goals for discipline is to help children learn self-regulation.



## Positive Reinforcement

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Recognizing and encouraging desired behaviors is the teachers' primary means for effective behavior management. If problems do arise, the teachers:

- Remind children in positive terms of acceptable behaviors (i.e. "Blocks are for building, not for throwing. Let's see what we can build with these blocks.")
- Redirect children's activity to an area that may be more calming or involving (i.e. water/sand play, play dough) and, only if warranted
- Remove the child from activity briefly until she/he is able to regain a measure of self-control.

This calming time typically occurs in the classroom, not in isolation, and generally the child determines when she/he is ready to re-enter the activity. The goal is not to embarrass or call attention to the child, but to offer a brief respite from activity so that the child can gain control of his/her own behavior.

At no time is corporal punishment, intimidation, shaming, shouting, or other forms of humiliating and/or frightening "discipline" tolerated. It is our belief while some behaviors cannot be accepted, each child must always be and feel accepted and loved. An example of patience, love, positive guidance, and forgiveness is a foundation of our philosophy as a Church related early childhood program.

## Enrollment

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Eligibility for enrollment is without regard to religious preference, race or ethnic background. Enrollment is confirmed when the preschool has received:

- Registration Form-completed and signed by parent or legal guardian
- Registration Fee- (non-refundable)
- Activity Fee (non-refundable)
- Deposit Fee

To complete enrollment we require:

- Copy of Child's Birth Certificate ( New enrollments only)
- Commonwealth of Virginia School Health and Immunization Form
- Emergency Care Information
- Tell Us About Your Child
- Food Allergy Form
- Medicine Administration Form
- Emergency Medicine Authorization Form—**only if needed**, for Inhalers and Epi-pens
- Healthy School Parental Agreement
- COVID-19 Pandemic Health Screening and Waiver of Liability



Program options and requirements are as follows:

<p><b>Toddler Program</b>  <i>18 months by September 30</i></p> <p>T/TH 10:00-2:00  M/W/F 9:00-1:00</p>	<p><b>Two-year Old Program</b>  <i>2 years by September 30</i></p> <p>M/W/F 9:00-1:00  T/TH 10:00- 2:00</p>	<p><b>Young Four-year Old Program</b>  <i>4 years by December 31  and fully potty-trained</i></p> <p>M/W/F 9:00-1:00</p>
<p><b>Brainy Bunch</b>  <i>3 years and fully potty-trained</i></p> <p>M/W/F 1:00-3:00</p>	<p><b>Young Three-year Old Program</b>  <i>3 years by December 31</i>  M/W/F 9:00-1:00  T/TH 10:00-2:00</p> <p><b>Three-year Old Program</b>  <i>3 years by September 30</i>  M/W/F 9:00-1:00  T/TH 10:00-2:00</p>	<p><b>Four-year Old Program</b>  <i>4 years by September 30  and fully potty-trained</i></p> <p>M-F 9:00-1:00  M/W/F 9:00-1:00  T/TH 10:00-2:00  T/W/TH 10:00-2:00</p>

### Special Needs

Enrollment of children with special needs shall be considered on a case-by-case basis and must have prior approval by the Preschool Director. Our teachers are not specifically trained in Special Education, and any special accommodations must be done with the consideration of every child in the classroom. Special accommodations cannot be made if those accommodations are beyond the scope of what is traditionally provided. Special accommodations cannot jeopardize our teacher/child ratio.

If a child enrolled in the program requires extra care in the context of the classroom, the Director, in collaboration with the teachers and with information gathered from the child's parents will determine the scope of special accommodations.

It is our goal to create the best possible learning environment for every child in our program. If the accommodations are within the scope of the program, the Director will communicate the accommodations to a team consisting of the parents, the teachers and resource specialists who will develop a clear outline of the accommodations. The teachers will document the progress and report the findings to the Director within two weeks. The plan can be altered as needed. If the team determines that the accommodations are not providing sufficient support enabling the child to progress to their full potential, the parents will be guided toward other alternatives which may better meet the needs of the child.



## Potty-training

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Children enrolled in our young fours and our fours programs must be fully potty-trained.

When you feel your child is ready for potty-training, we ask that you begin teaching at home during a weekend or vacation. *PLEASE NOTE: We will only assist your child in potty-training if you have previously and successfully begun training at home for one week.*

We require that children be at least 2 years of age **and** show signs of readiness (please read the Potty-training Readiness Checklist below). Training is most successful with positive reinforcement and consistency between school and home.

Children are accustomed to soiled diapers, so our goal in potty training is to train sensitivity to soiled diapers and the desire and eventual habit of independently going to the potty. Our potty-training will be done in a relaxed manner and in collaboration with families. We will start your child by wearing pull-ups and making regular potty-runs throughout the day with an encouraging and positive manner.

**Under no circumstance will we allow children to wear underwear to school until at least two full weeks of preschool have been fully accident-free.** Accident-free means no wet or messy pull-ups during the entire day. To maintain sanitary conditions and abide by health department standards, children are not allowed to urinate or soil their surroundings when other children are in the same area. It only takes a few minutes for a child with wet or messy clothes to create an unsanitary environment.

### Proper Clothing

Do not bring your child in underwear until he/she is accident free at preschool for at least two weeks. During potty-training, your child should be dressed in “user friendly” clothing. The best clothing is pants with an elastic waist as they allow your child to pull pants up and down, quickly and independently. Remember, too many layers or long dresses makes it difficult to easily access the toilet in time. Please **DO NOT** dress your child in the following:

tight clothing,  
shirts that snap in the crotch,  
pants with snaps & zippers

overalls or bib type clothing,  
belts, or  
one-piece outfits.

### Required Supplies

The following items must be left at school and replaced as needed. Soiled clothes will be returned in a plastic bag at the end of the day.

Two (2) complete changes of clothing including socks (an extra pair of shoes if available), and a bag of pull-ups or diapers – you will be notified when the supply runs low.

### Potty Schedule

For the first week, *all* children will follow the potty schedule below:

upon arrival at school,  
before and after snack,  
before and after lunch,

before and after going outside,  
and just before going home.



## **Potty-training Readiness Checklist**

### **Verbal Stages of Readiness**

- Basic verbal skills: child is able to speak in three to four-word sentences.
- Stage 1: child tells you he/she has a wet diaper, recognizes when he/she is wet.
- Stage 2: child tells you he/she is wetting, recognizes the sensation of being wet.
- Stage 3: child tells you he/she will wet, can control him/herself & uses the potty.

### **Physical and Psychological sign of readiness**

- Stays dry for a long period of time (the child is able to “hold” his/her urine and bowel movement)
- Can recognize when diaper/pull-up is wet or soiled
- Has bowel movements at regular times (child chooses when to move its bowels)
- Adult can recognize when child is moving his/her bowels (Child is deliberately moving bowels)
- Tries to undress and pull up his/her own pants
- Initiates interest in using the potty and asks to wear underwear
- Wants to be independent, which is very important for the learning process
- Child is emotionally ready and is open to learning (is child generally cooperative?)
- Child has an awareness and knowledge of the world beyond himself. (This sign may seem unrelated to Potty-training, but it is a behavior that has been seen in children ready to use the potty)
- Can follow three and four step instructions (this is critical for learning to urinate or move bowels, wipe himself and wash hands)
- Can use consistent words or gestures to communicate.
- Is able to physically get to the potty and sit on it without help.
- Must show a willingness to want to sit on the potty and understand its function.

## **Tax Information**

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Families who claim dependent child care on Federal and State Tax returns may contact the preschool office or the preschool financial manager for documentation.

## **Tuition, Due Dates and Penalties**

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Tuition is subject to an annual review and may be changed with the approval of the Preschool Board. Payments should be made payable to **St. Stephen’s UMC Preschool**.

Tuition is calculated on an annual basis and divided into nine equal payments. Tuition payments remain the same regardless of absences for any reason, including days such as special needs services, holidays, shortened hours (including September hours), teacher work days, vacations, Fairfax County Public Schools (“FCPS”) student holidays, closings due to inclement weather, catastrophes, or any emergencies effecting personnel or the use of the building or school grounds.

Tuition is due monthly on the first day of each month school is in session. Payment of tuition after the tenth day following its due date will result in the assessment of a late payment fee of \$50.00. An assessment fee will be charged for any check returned for insufficient funds.

If tuition is more than 31 days in arrears, you will be contacted to determine if you wish to discontinue your child's enrollment. If no reasonable effort is made to clear the delinquent account, your child will be considered to be withdrawn.

A deposit fee equal to one month's tuition is due by June 1<sup>st</sup>. This deposit fee shall be applied to the tuition amount owed for May. This deposit fee may not be transferred or applied to another month's tuition. If the deposit fee is not received by June 1<sup>st</sup>, your child will not be considered enrolled. If your child does not enter the school year during the normal registration period, the due date for the required deposit fee will be decided by the preschool Director/Financial Manager.

If the Preschool closes temporarily due to positive COVID-19 cases within the school, tuition will not be prorated or refunded. If the Preschool closes due to state or locally mandated closures, tuition already paid for the current month will not be refunded. If the closure extends into the following month, no tuition will be due until we return back to school. Tuition due may be prorated based on the date of return.

### **Withdrawal Procedures**

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Should you need to withdrawal your child during the school year, you must submit written notification at least thirty days prior to your departure. Once appropriate documentation is received by the school office, your advanced tuition payment can be used as your final monthly payment.

If, during the school term, it is necessary to withdraw your child from the program, notice must be given in writing one month in advance. With less than 30 days' notice, a one-month tuition payment will be required.

The deposit fee may be transferred to cover the last tuition payment if the full 30-day notice has been given. If a child is withdrawn during the last two months of school, full tuition must be paid for these months.

### **Calendars and Schedules**

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A calendar showing the first and last day, holidays and other closing dates will be provided to families at the beginning of the school year. Dates for school activities (i.e. visits from community helpers or other enrichment activities and special visitors,) will be provided throughout the year in newsletters and calendars from the Director and the classroom teachers.

The Preschool follows Fairfax County Public Schools ("FCPS") closing schedule for holidays, September through May. Unforeseen closings will be communicated via e-mail. In addition, the Preschool will observe the following inclement weather closing policy:

<b>St. Stephen's opening schedule</b>	<b>M - F Classes</b>	<b>M/W/F Classes</b>	<b>T/W/TH Classes</b>	<b>T/TH Classes</b>
FCPS 2 hour delayed opening	11:00 am–1:00 pm	11:00 am–1:00 pm	11:00 am–2:00 pm	11:00 am–2:00 pm
FCPS 2 hour early release	12:00 noon	12:00 noon	12:00 noon	12:00 noon

School closings will be made up on the Tuesday and Wednesday after Memorial Day per the schedule below

- Two day-a-week students:
  - Days 1 - 4 will not be made up.
  - Day 5 will be made up on the Tuesday after Memorial Day.
  - Days in excess of 5 will not be made up
- Three day-a-week students:
  - Days 1 - 6 will not be made up.
  - Day 7 will be made up on the Wednesday after Memorial Day.
  - Days in excess of 7 will not be made up
- Five day-a-week students:
  - Days 1 - 7 will not be made up.
  - Day 8 will be made up on the Tuesday after Memorial Day.
  - Days in excess of 8 will not be made up



### **Attendance**

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Since we take daily attendance, we request a call to the office or an e-mail informing us of your child's absence.

### **Insurance**

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While your child is at Preschool accident insurance is provided under the Church's umbrella policy. If medical treatment should be required as a result of injury sustained on Church premises, this insurance will supplement your personal coverage, if needed. Accident insurance coverage is automatic and included in your registration fee.

### **Clothing**

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Children learn through active exploration of the classroom and playground. They need to feel free to enter activities without fear of damaging their clothing. Please dress them in comfortable, durable clothing. Because our playground has climbers and is surfaced with mulch and pebbles, we ask that you send your children in shoes that completely enclose their feet and have soles that are safe for climbing. Sandals are often uncomfortable on the playground surface. Clothing should be easy for children to manage themselves - zippers instead of buttons, mittens instead of gloves, etc. Please remember that we will use the playground daily unless it is raining or extremely cold. We hope you will support our program by dressing your child appropriately for any type of weather: sun, rain, snow, mud, or cold.

### **Illness**

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The health and safety of your children is very important to us. The Commonwealth of Virginia School Entrance Health form is required as a condition of admission to SSUMC Preschool and must be filed with us prior to the beginning of the school year. This form must be signed by your child's doctor to the effect that she/he is healthy, able to participate in school activities, and has completed required immunizations. Parents must notify the school in writing if their child has any emergency or health information changes or additional immunizations. Immunization records must be kept current at all times.

In the event your child becomes ill at school, parents will be notified immediately. Arrangements must be made to have your child picked up within 30 minutes. It is essential that you keep all work, home and cell phone numbers current. Please notify the preschool office within 24 hours if a student contracts a communicable disease or is exposed to a communicable disease such as by a sibling so that we can promptly notify parents of classmates of the affected family. A health alert notice will be sent out if your child has been exposed to communicable diseases per state regulations.

*In order to limit the spread of illness as much as possible, please cooperate by **keeping your child at home**:*

- If they have a cough or runny nose
- Whenever a fever has reached 100° or greater and for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without fever-reducing medicine
- When there has been vomiting or diarrhea, for at least 24 hours after cessation of symptoms
- Until they have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours; or until your doctor recommends resuming school
- If they have a sore throat, headache, stomach ache, unusual spots or rashes, infected skin patches, severe itching of body or scalp, yellowish skin or eyes
- If they have pinkeye symptoms—tears, redness of eye, with swelling and discharge of pus.
- For the recommended treatment and follow up for parasites
- During the incubation period of a contagious disease
- If they generally feel unwell

If your child has an illness which can easily be passed from one student to another we require a note from a physician stating your child is no longer contagious and may return to school. If you are unsure if your child should come to school, please call the preschool office.

All children are expected to participate daily in outdoor play, weather permitting. Outdoor play is necessary for good physical development and general health. Do not send your child to school if she/he is not well enough to participate in outdoor activities. We cannot arrange for an adult to watch a child inside during this period as both teachers are required to supervise their class outdoors.

### **Special Health Concerns and Allergies**

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If your child has a special health condition, health related need, or specific health care procedure that affects the school day, please contact the School Office prior to starting school, so that a health care plan can be arranged.

### **Medical Emergencies during School Hours**

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To help maintain a safe environment for our children, there will always be preschool personnel on site with current First Aid and CPR certificates. As part of the registration process each family shall complete an Authorization for Emergency Treatment granting permission for the Preschool to take whatever steps may be necessary to obtain emergency medical care. In the event of an accident or other medical emergency which warrants immediate medical attention, we will first call 9-1-1 for treatment and transportation to the nearest medical facility. A parent or designated emergency contact person will be notified immediately. Any medical or emergency medical services transport fees incurred during such an occurrence will be the responsibility of the parents or guardian.

## Medications

***Information about severe health situations must be reported on the Emergency Care Form and Health Form, and medication authorization forms must be signed by both the prescribing physician and the parent each school year. We require that all such medications be brought to school on your child's first day of school and left at school for the entire school term.*** We will maintain Epi-Pens and Benadryl prescribed by a physician in the preschool office to be available for administration as needed. Parents will be responsible for ensuring that long term medications are current and will not expire during the course of the school year. In the event that the child's emergency medication is given, 9-1-1 will be called. The Preschool staff will administer Epi-Pens. Benadryl will be kept on-site for paramedics or parents use. Medicine is not allowed in children's tote bags.

The Preschool staff is not able to administer any daily or preventive medications-prescriptions or non-prescription (including, but not limited to Tylenol, cough syrup, diaper ointment, sunscreen and topical insect repellants).

## Arrival and Dismissal

Children are to be brought to the classroom door. Make certain a teacher has acknowledged your child before leaving. If you wish to visit with other parents, please do so outside the classroom. If your child is ever reluctant to stay, please follow the guidance of the teacher. If your child arrives 15 minutes late, bring your child to the preschool office for check-in. A staff member will escort your child to their classroom.

**Children should be picked up promptly from the classroom** at the close of the session. Children will be released only to authorized individuals. In the event of an emergency, a phone call to the preschool office is acceptable as permission to release your child to an individual not previously authorized. *Prompt arrival and pick-up are important to the child's well-being and feeling of security.*

If it is necessary for a child to be picked up prior to the regular dismissal time, you must report to the preschool office for the child to be checked-out. A staff member will bring your child to the office for dismissal.



## Communication

We believe in open communication at all times between families and the Preschool. You will receive monthly newsletters from your child's teacher which will provide specifics about the curriculum, special classroom events and plans. You will also receive emails from the Director which give a general school-wide calendar and articles of interest to families. We have many resources available to you pertaining to child development, education, and parenting. Feel free to ask for information on topics of interest to you. We like our parents to be informed about their child's preschool day. Please communicate with the teachers or the office to ask any questions you might have. We are available as partners in your child's early education. Please remember it is important to keep your contact information and your child's medical records current at all times.

## **Lunch and Snack**

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Children will bring their lunch from home to eat at school. All lunch items should be packed in a lunch sack or lunch box with the child's name on the outside. Please label everything in your child's lunch including beverage and food containers and utensils.

Snack is provided daily in all of our classes. A snack calendar is posted on the bulletin board outside of your child's classroom. If your child would like to share a snack with the class, please add your name to the snack calendar. Your teachers will suggest healthy snack choices and may ask for some food items to be avoided due to children's allergies.

Generally, only one type of snack is offered to the class. If children have special dietary requirements or allergies, teachers will work with you to provide suitable alternatives. Children are encouraged to try different foods but may choose not to eat what is offered on a given day.

## **Visiting the Preschool**

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For the safety of every child in the preschool, our doors will remain locked during the school day. They will be unlocked during drop off and pick-up. During all other times visitors will need to be buzzed in, using our door buzzer/camera system. All visitors will then need to report to the Preschool Office where they will sign in and receive a visitor lanyard.

## **Tote Bags**

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Each child will receive a special St. Stephen's tote bag when they meet their teachers during "Sneak Peek." Please bring your child's tote bag to class every day. Their tote bags fit nicely on our classroom hooks. Please check your child's tote bag **daily** after school for artwork, if new diapers or change of clothing are needed, or for paperwork from the office. However, with few exceptions, please hand in any paperwork you are returning directly to the office.

## **Extra Change of Clothes**

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All children should have a change of clothes in a labeled plastic bag at school. Some teachers may ask that the change of clothes stay in your child's tote bag and some may keep them in the classroom. Please check your child's tote bag daily to see if a new set of clothes is needed.

## **Special Events**

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We have many wonderful events that happen at St. Stephen's during the year. A special presenter/performer will visit the preschool once a month. We enjoy visits from the dentist, magicians, musicians, and fire fighters, just to name a few. We also have theme events in Music and Movement every month. Our students visit Space Camp, a Dinosaur Museum, a Fall Festival, a Winter Wonderland, play in Santa's Workshop and learn about their community in Our Town.

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### **Back to School Night**

We welcome all parents to an evening learning about your child's day at St. Stephen's. Your child's teachers will speak with you about your child's classroom and all the wonderful things they have planned for the year. *This is an adult only event.*

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### **Halloween Parade**

What fun we have parading through the school in the costumes we made in our classrooms. We stop by each classroom and receive a small snack.

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### **Thanksgiving Feast**

Each class prepares a special dish to bring to the Thanksgiving Feast. All of the classes feast together in this wonderful celebration of Thanksgiving. Because of space limitations, this is a student only event.

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### **Holiday Tea**

This is a very special, annual event at St. Stephen's. The children sit with their families as we gather in the sanctuary for Noah's Ark and to sing holiday songs, we then make our way back to the individual classrooms where the children have prepared a special holiday snack for their guests.

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### **Buddy Night**

An evening event when each child may bring **one** "buddy" to share a shortened version of a typical preschool day. Buddy Night is only for our three year old and Pre-K classes. We find this event to run too late for our toddler classes.

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### **Founder's Day**

On a Saturday in May we celebrate the founding of the preschool by giving the preschool a party and inviting all of our families. Please bring a picnic lunch and enjoy all of the festivities!

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### **Noah's Ark**

Once a month our older classes listen as our associate pastor tells them a bible story. Noah's Ark is the last half hour of the school day and everyone is welcome to attend.

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### **Speech and Language Screening**

As part of our program, each child will have a speech and language screenings for each child conducted by a licensed Pediatric Speech Pathologist.

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### **Music and Movement**

Music and Movement is every Tuesday through Friday. Our program helps to develop mindfulness, core muscle strength, flexibility, cardio fitness, and music appreciation.

## **Spanish**

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Once a week all the children go to Spanish class where they enjoy a language lesson tailored for their age group. They learn to greet each other in Spanish, use the names of colors, numbers, and letters, and learn the Spanish words for their family members. Every lesson includes a fun game or a song to reinforce the theme. The words for the month are included in the monthly parent newsletter so that families can practice at home.

## **Brainy Bunch**

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Brainy Bunch is an after school program where the children who are 3 and up and fully potty trained participate in literacy, cooking, character building, math, games, languages, science exploration, sports, esteem building, social development, theater, nature, and STEM. All Brainy Bunch participants are automatically enrolled in all extended day enrichment activities at no additional cost. However, signed permission slips are required for your child to participate in the extended day enrichment activities.

## **Conferences**

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Two formal conferences are scheduled each year. Prior to each conference, formal assessments and informal observations appropriate for young children will have been conducted. This information will be discussed and written copies provided. During the fall conference, goals for the child will be discussed. During the spring conference the child's progress along with additional classroom observations will be shared. If at any time a parent desires a conference with the teachers, the teachers and/or the Director will be available upon request.

## **Confidentiality**

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Access to student documentation (i.e.: registration, medical (health and safety), assessments, etc.) is available on an as needed basis to preschool staff and regulatory authorities and to the individual child's parents/guardian at their request. Documentation is secured in locked file cabinet in the preschool office. Assessment information is used as a tool to help preschool staff and the student's families aid the student in their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Information regarding your child will be released to outside agencies only with your written consent.

## **Code of Conduct**

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The SSUMC Preschool Code of Conduct is designed to promote a Christian learning environment based on respect for the rights of students, teachers and parents. Students learn best when they are guided by others and know clearly what is expected. Teachers can be most effective when they offer a consistent approach to student behavior, knowing the school and parents support their decisions for the students.

Parents have the most impact on their child's behavior and serve as constant role models. Therefore, we hold both parents and preschool staff accountable for modeling positive behavior for the children. We expect our staff, and request our parents, to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous, professional and rational manner, affirming rather than threatening staff, other parents or students.



The possession of illegal substances, tobacco, or unlicensed firearms is prohibited. Verbal or physical abuse, indecent exposure, inappropriate language or use of profanity and confidentiality breaches are unacceptable.

Please arrive for drop off and pick up at the designated times and refrain from cell phone use during these times. Additionally, we ask parents be alert to their children's behavior at all times, including while socializing before or after school. Your children should be within your sight at all times while on church property.

The preschool may choose to immediately terminate employment or enrollment if the Code of Conduct is disregarded.

We can grow in the blessing we each bring to the relationship we are building between our school, community and your children.

**St. Stephen's United Methodist Church does not allow smoking on the premises.**

### **Releases**

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As the parent or guardian, you agree to allow and permit your child to participate in planned preschool activities conducted by the St. Stephen's United Methodist Church Preschool ("the Preschool") that are conducted in the normal course of the Preschool activities under the direct supervision of the director and/or faculty of the Preschool. Except for injury that your child may sustain as a direct consequence of the proven gross negligence or willful misconduct of any officer or employee of the Preschool in the conduct of such activities, you agree to hereby forever discharge, waive, and release the Preschool, and all of its officers, directors, trustees, employees, and agents, from any and all claims, demands, accountings, liabilities, obligations, actions, causes of action, in law or equity, known or unknown, contingent or matured, and whether within the contemplation of the Guardian or not, which Guardian may have had, now have, or may have in the future, arising out of or existing by reason of my child's participation in the activities of the Preschool.

During the school year, the preschool will be taking photos of many of the children, staff and parents at play and work. These photos could be used in future publications such as newsletters and brochures, multimedia presentations or to place on the church and/or preschool web site. No names will be attached to any photos.

By signing the registration form, you are giving St. Stephen's United Methodist Church and Preschool permission to take photos of your child for the purposes stated above and that you do not expect, nor require, any financial remuneration for the reproduction of such photos now or in the future. If you prefer not to have your child included, please indicate your preference on the registration form.

## **Religious Exemption Status**

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St. Stephen's UMC Preschool has a religious exemption from licensure. In compliance with the Code of Virginia regarding exemption from licensure, we are to disclose specified information to families in our program.

Section 63.1-196.3 of the Code of Virginia exempts child day care centers operated under the auspices of a religious institution from licensure. If a child day care operated under the auspices of a religious institution is not licensed, certain documentation must be filed annually with the Department of Social Services. In addition, the Code of Virginia outlines the additional requirements the exempt child day center must meet, including disclosure. These items include criteria for hiring of faculty, location, capacity, and insurance coverage.

We are registered with and inspected by the Fairfax County Health and Fire Departments and the Commonwealth of Virginia Division of Licensing Programs, Social Services division.





## **St. Stephen's UMC Preschool** **2021/2022**



St. Stephen's Preschool COVID plan follows the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Health, Fairfax County Department of Health, the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Virginia UMC Conference guidelines and recommendations.

The health and safety of all children has always been a priority. In light of COVID 19, both the Preschool and parents must be extra vigilant and work as a team to keep all our students and staff safe and healthy. This partnership will require commitment on both parts, the Preschool will implement all recommended measures to prevent the spread of COVID 19, and parents and caregivers must agree to keep their student home if they are not 100% healthy.

Overview of precautions that will be in place:

- Attendance and temperature will be taken and recorded for every child and staff member each day. Temperature and attendance logs will be kept in the office.
- A Weekly Health Screening and Waiver Liability form will be required for all students, families, and staff to ensure safety. Families will be asked each day if anything has changed since the weekly signing of the Waiver.
- All families will be required to sign the Healthy School Parental Agreement and also complete the weekly health screening and waiver liabilities in order for their child to attend our preschool.
- Face masks required— for all staff, adults, students age two and older; face shields may be worn in addition to masks. Parents and caregivers are required to wear masks at all times while on Church property.
- Sanitizing stations around the building; increased hand washing
- Sanitizing/cleaning supplies for each classroom,
- Increased outdoor play to include additional areas (blacktop, outdoor classroom, patio, yard)
- Parents dropping off students must maintain strict 6 foot social distance.
- Visual cues will be provided each day at each entrance and exit to ensure 6 foot social distancing
- No unauthorized visitors in the building
- One person per family regularly dropping off, if possible
- No mixing of groups/classes
- Sanitizing and cleaning between groups and end of day
- No sharing of supplies; students will use personalized school supplies

- No large group gatherings/spaces
- Specials will be live streamed to the classrooms or provided via pre-recorded options
- Some furniture removed from classrooms to allow for more social distancing space
- Training and instruction for staff
- A quarantine area is designated for brief usage where any student who becomes ill at school will be cared for while waiting to be immediately picked up by their parent or guardian
- All special events will be cancelled or changed to virtual execution
- Class sizes are reduced up to 25% to allow for more social distancing

**If any family does not comply with our rules and regulations, they will be asked to do so. If they refuse to comply then their student will be dis-enrolled.**

### **REOPENING PLAN DETAILS**

- Masks will be required for students age two and older. Parents will be responsible for providing suitable masks for their children. Face shields can be worn in addition to masks. A new disposable, or a clean, freshly washed reusable cloth mask will be worn each day. If using reusable cloth masks, plan on having multiple masks to ensure the easy ability to wear a clean mask each day. Parents and caregivers are required to wear masks at all times while on Church property.
- Teachers PPE items – St. Stephen’s Preschool staff will be required to wear face masks. Teachers may decide to wear shields in addition to the masks. Shields will be provided to all staff. Teachers may choose to wear large over-clothes (smocks) to go over their own clothing when they comfort and are in contact with students. Scrubs may be worn as an alternative to casual clothes as well.
- Students will be required to wash hands immediately upon entering classrooms
- Classroom items such as tables, toys, games, and other supplies will be disinfected between uses
- Parent access into the preschool building and classrooms is restricted at this time
- Recommended social distancing measures will be in place
- Recess will be held outdoors as weather permits. When indoors, students will follow physical distancing guidelines for activities and multiple spaces will be utilized
- Classes will remain with their own cohort and will not mix with other classes in group settings
- Recess time will be structured to maintain physical distancing. Additional recess time may include walks and other outdoor activities as weather permits
- Noah’s Ark will be held in the classrooms via Zoom, prerecorded and/or live streamed into the classrooms
- Disinfecting of shared areas will occur between uses—bathrooms, playground

- Some furniture is being removed to create space in classrooms and allow for ease of cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing
- Hula hoops and foam pool noodles will be used to give students visual cues of personal space, as they can be used to spread out in many different learning spaces. Each class will have their own spacing teaching aids
- School supplies – St. Stephen’s Preschool usually provides shared items and supplies for community and class use. That will change this school year. Each student will have their own boxes of school supplies. These boxes will house each student’s individual school supply items and the boxes will be sanitized at the end of each class day.
- Removal of cloth items, dress-up clothing, stuffed animals, baby doll clothes, etc., is occurring in the classrooms to ensure items that are used by students for instructional purposes are easy to wash and sanitize as we disinfect and provide a safe classroom environment.
- Drop off and pick up—Instead of coming inside for drop off and pick up, parents will be dropping off and picking up at the doors of different entrances. The main Preschool entrance and the entrance down at the end of the Preschool hall by Brainy Bunch will be used. Before any child or staff member enters the building their temperature will be taken and logged, and confirmation of signed waivers will be required. After a child enters the building, they will be taken directly to their classroom. Several visual cues will be provided to ensure 6 foot social distancing during drop off and pick up.

### **COVID-19 Protocol**

According to the CDC, people with COVID 19 have had a wide range of reported symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure**. Symptoms can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms, and adults, children and youth with COVID 19 infection may experience any, all, or none of these symptoms.

Although many of these symptoms may also be caused by other illnesses, in the midst of this pandemic we must be extra vigilant. If your student shows any of these symptoms, or just generally feels unwell, we require that you keep them home.

If your child begins to show any of these symptoms at school, your child will immediately be isolated in a separate room. You will be called and asked to come immediately to take them home for self-quarantine and testing. **If you cannot pick them up within half an hour, an emergency contact will be called.** In addition to the above COVID 19 symptoms, each child must be kept home if they have any unusual spots or rashes, infected skin patches, severe itching of body or scalp, yellowish skin or eyes, or pinkeye symptoms—tears, redness of eye, with swelling and discharge of pus. Each child must be kept home until your physician says it is acceptable to return. A release/note from the doctor or a negative COVID test result will be required (electronic form is acceptable).

**It is vitally important that parents, caregivers, and staff keep St. Stephen's Preschool informed of any symptoms, illnesses and diagnosis.** Any students or staff member must stay home from school or work if they have (1) tested positive for COVID-19; (2) had close contact with anyone confirmed to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days; (3) are experiencing symptoms listed above.

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 for a student or staff member who has been on campus, we will notify by phone the Fairfax County Health Department and our Virginia Department of Social Services Childcare Licensing inspector and follow their guidance regarding the necessity of a school closure. We will follow their mandates regarding closure of a specific classroom or the entire school. Areas where the infected person has been will be closed off for a minimum of 24 hours then disinfected. All parents, staff and church pastors will be notified **via e-mail** of a confirmed case of COVID-19 on campus.

Students or staff members who exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and who are not tested will be presumed positive for COVID-19.

A student or staff member who has a positive COVID-19 case may NOT return until a negative, written COVID test result has been submitted to the school administration

### **LARGE GROUP/FAMILY EVENTS**

All large group and family events scheduled for the school year are cancelled until further notice. Examples of this would be the Halloween Parade, Thanksgiving Feasts, and our Holiday Social. Accommodations will be made to continue the family/community feel in a virtual and digital way to provide connection and community among our school family.

### **LUNCH**

Students will bring in their own lunches. In addition, each student must bring with them a refillable water bottle. The students will be seated 3 feet apart during lunch and snack.

### **OUTDOOR SPACES**

Following St. Stephen's UMC church requirements, students and families are currently not allowed to utilize outdoor areas to congregate before or after school.

### **DISINFECTING PLAN**

**Disinfecting measures will be implemented as follows:**

- Cleaning and disinfecting will be performed according to CDC guidance using soap and bleach solutions.
- Classroom desks, tables and furniture and other supplies will be disinfected between each use.

- A designated member of our staff will be assigned to clean and disinfect all door handles, bathroom spaces, and other high touch, high traffic areas across our building throughout the school day.
- Our contracted janitorial company will perform nightly cleaning and disinfecting. Special attention will be paid to sanitizing high touch areas.
- Hand sanitizer stations have been placed near entrances and throughout the school.
- Our playgrounds will be sanitized between each class usage with an EPA approved Quat Sanitizer that that kills SARS-CoV-2, the novel corona virus that causes the disease COVID-19.

### **MODIFICATIONS**

This plan may be modified in the future according to any guidelines or requirements set forth by the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Health, Fairfax County Department of Health, the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Virginia UMC Conference. Any modifications to this plan will be approved by the Preschool Committee and the Board of Trustees, with the consultation of the Post-COVID Reentry Group.



## St. Stephen's UMC Preschool Healthy School Parental Agreement



The health and safety of your children has always been a priority. In light of COVID 19, St. Stephen's Preschool and parents must be extra vigilant and work as a team to keep all our students and staff safe and healthy. This partnership will require commitment on both parts, St. Stephen's Preschool will implement all recommended measures to prevent the spread of COVID 19, and parents and caregivers must agree to keep their student home if they are not 100% healthy.

According to the CDC, people with COVID 19 have had a wide range of reported symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure**. Symptoms can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms, and adults, children and youth with COVID 19 infection may experience any, all, or none of these symptoms.

Although many of these symptoms may also be caused by other illnesses, in the midst of this pandemic we must be extra vigilant. If your student shows any of these symptoms, or just generally feels unwell, we require that you keep them home.

If your child begins to show any of these symptoms at school, your child will immediately be isolated in a separate room. You will be called and asked to come immediately to take them home for self-quarantine and testing. **If you cannot pick them up within half an hour, an emergency contact will be called.** In addition to the above COVID 19 symptoms, your child must be kept home if they have any unusual spots or rashes, infected skin patches, severe itching of body or scalp, yellowish skin or eyes, or pinkeye symptoms—tears, redness of eye, with swelling and discharge of pus. Each child must be kept at home until your physician says it is acceptable to return. A release/note from the doctor or negative COVID test results will be required (electronic form is acceptable).

**It is vitally important that parents, caregivers, and staff members keep St. Stephen's Preschool informed of any symptoms, illnesses and diagnosis.** Any students or staff members must stay home from school or work if they have (1) tested positive for COVID-19; (2) had close contact with anyone confirmed to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days; (3) are experiencing symptoms listed above.



In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 for a student or staff member who has been on campus, we will notify by phone the Fairfax County Health Department and our Virginia Department of Social Services Childcare Licensing inspector and follow their guidance regarding the necessity of a preschool closure. We will follow their mandates regarding closure of a specific classroom or the entire preschool. Areas where the infected person has been will be closed off for a minimum of 24 hours then disinfected. All parents, staff and church pastors will be notified **via e-mail** of a confirmed case of COVID-19 on campus.

Students or staff members who exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and who are not tested will be presumed positive for COVID-19.

A student or staff member who has a positive COVID-19 case may NOT return until a written, negative COVID test result has been submitted to the school administration.

Precautions that will be in place:

- Attendance and temperature will be taken and recorded for every child and staff member each day. Temperature and attendance logs will be kept in the office.
- A Weekly Health Screening and Waiver Liability form will be required for all students, families, and staff to ensure safety. Families will be asked each day if anything has changed since the weekly signing of the Waiver.
- All families will be required to sign the Healthy School Parental Agreement and also complete the weekly health screening and Waiver liabilities in order for their child to attend our preschool.
- Face masks required– for all staff, adults, students age two and older; face shields may be worn in addition to masks. Parents and caregivers are required to wear masks at all times while on Church property.
- Sanitizing stations around the building; increased hand washing
- Sanitizing/cleaning supplies for each classroom,
- Increased outdoor play to include additional areas (blacktop, outdoor classroom, patio, yard)
- Specific exits and entrances for each classroom. Parents dropping off students must maintain strict 6 foot social distance.
- Visual cues will be provided each day at each entrance and exit to ensure 6 foot social distancing
- No unauthorized visitors in the building
- One person per family regularly dropping off, if possible
- No mixing of groups/classes
- Sanitizing and cleaning between groups and end of day

- No sharing of supplies; students will use personalized school supplies
- No large group gatherings/spaces
- Specials will be live streamed to the classrooms or provided via pre-recorded options
- Some furniture removed from classrooms to allow for more social distancing space
- Training and instruction for staff
- A quarantine area is designated for brief usage where any student who becomes ill at school will be cared for while waiting to be immediately picked up by their parent or guardian
- All special events will be cancelled or changed to virtual execution
- Class sizes are reduced up to 25% to allow for more social distancing

**If any family does not comply with our rules and regulations, they will be asked to do so.  
If they refuse to comply then their student will be dis-enrolled.**

## **PARENTAL AGREEMENT**

**I have read and understand the attached healthy school policy, and I agree to abide by it for the protection of my child as well as the other children and staff members at St. Stephen's UMC Preschool.**

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent / Guardian Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**



# St. Stephen's UMC Preschool

## COVID-19 Pandemic Health Screening and Waiver of Liability



I affirm that:

1. Neither I, my student, nor anyone in my household (We) has any symptoms of COVID-19, to include: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. \*\*Symptoms taken from the CDC website
2. We have not had any of the above symptoms of COVID-19 during the last 14 days.
3. We have been following all restrictions mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia.
4. To my knowledge we have not been exposed to anyone with COVID-19 symptoms in the last 14 days. (Refer to item #1)
5. I have not given my student fever reducing medicine in the last 24 hours.
6. I understand that during my student's attendance at St. Stephen's UMC Preschool they may be exposed to the COVID-19 virus or the risk of such exposure, which may be lowered but not eliminated. The risk and hazard of COVID-19 may include, but are not limited to, the dangers of serious illness and death.
7. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to assess our own risk factors and to make a decision regarding whether I can safely send my student to St. Stephen's UMC Preschool.
8. I understand the inherent risks of transmission of COVID-19 during this global pandemic and I am waiving and releasing St. Stephen's UMC Church and Preschool from liability.
9. I will immediately notify St. Stephen's Preschool administration of any symptoms (refer to item #1), illnesses, and diagnosis of COVID-19.

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Student's name

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Parent/Guardian 1 Signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian 2 Signature

Date

**REVISED 8/1/2021**