Dear Parents,

Welcome to Noah’s Ark Child Enrichment Center !

This handbook has been prepared to help you better understand our program and answer any questions you might have.

Please know of our sincere desire to provide developmental care in a Christian atmosphere for your child. The Bible states, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). This verse summarizes the objective of our program. We intend to help each child grow mentally, physically, spiritually, socially and to give your child the loving care and guidance he needs during his formative years. We see each child as a unique individual and strive to instill in each child a positive self image and confidence in their own abilities. Children learn by “doing”. When provided with a variety of materials appropriate for their level of development, the child will learn the necessary skills without undue pressure or structure.

Thank you for sharing your child with us. We take seriously the trust you put in us in helping your child develop. We are looking forward to an exciting year.

Please feel free to visit us, ask questions, and make suggestions.

 *The Director and Staff*

First United Methodist church of Pine Mountain

Noah’s Ark Child Enrichment Center

Parents Handbook

**Mission Statement**

Our Mission is to provide a child centered learning environment for children to experience Christ’s love.

**Philosophy**

The focus of our program is on the children and their needs.

 Often referred to as emergent or child centered curriculum.

**Goals**

Our goal is to help children grow in their wonder of the world. A child who can wonder and marvel has a strong foundation for learning and for recognizing the awesome and loving mystery of God.

Program Hours:

Four day program: Monday-Thursday 8:30-11:30

Three day program: Tuesday-Thursday 8:30-11:30

We follow the Harris county school calendar and inclement weather plan.

Contact Info:

FUMC

P.O. Box 246

206 McDougland Ave, N.

Pine Mountain, GA 31822

706-663-2538 church office

Larkin Cunningham, Director

706-573-8232

**What is Child Centered Curriculum?**

* Teachers put play at the heart of the curriculum. They provide for play with ample time and materials.
* Teachers plan the environment as the basis for curriculum, which is child-centered and reflects the children’s interest and lives. Materials are in good condition, interesting, and organized with attention to aesthetics.
* Teachers understand that children are active, sensory learners who need many opportunities for self-chosen exploration, social interaction, and problem solving. These teachers are more interested in this process than in final products to show off the curriculum.
* Teachers observe individual children and the themes of their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. They make note of the children’s questions, skills, and frustrations.
* Teaches use children’s “themes” as the basis for curriculum planning. Planning involves an introduction of materials and interactions to stimulate the emergence of the children’s ideas and understandings.
* As the children engage with materials provided, teachers observe, offer guidance, and plan enrichment activities to add to the environment.
* Teachers share their own passions, interest, and questions, which may serve as another source of children’s interests and curriculum.
* Written curriculum plans document the children’s involvement with materials, questions, and discoveries, rather than document activities teachers will direct.
* For typically developing children, individual planning addresses frustration by focusing on children’s strengths. Teachers seek the children’s point of view in pursuing and readiness agenda.
* *Reflecting Children’s Lives: A handbook for planning child- centered curriculum.* By Deb Curtis and Margie Carter

**Learning Objectives**

The following are our objectives in working with your children. They will vary depending on age and ability of each child.

**Spiritual**

**To help the child-**

* Grow in the knowledge of God; God’s love and God’s care.
* To know that Jesus is God’s son; to feel that Jesus is a special friend; to know ways Jesus helped people; to want to be like Jesus.
* To think of the Bible as a special book and learn some Bible stories and verses.
* To think of the church as a special place where we learn about God and Jesus.

**Mental**

**To help the child-**

* Develop language skills through everyday activities that develop into reading when the child is ready.
* Learn about people and the world around us.
* Learn to follow instructions.
* Growth in creativity.
* Engaging experiences which will lead to success in mathematics.
* Develop reasoning, thinking, and problem solving skills.

**Physical**

**To help the child-**

* Develop large and small motor skills.
* Establish good health rules.
* Learn and follow simple rules of safety.

**Social**

**To help the child-**

* Grow in the ability to work and play with others.
* Respect personal rights of others.
* Develop an attitude of kindness, cooperation, courtesy, and helpfulness.
* Experience a positive introduction to an educational environment.

**Emotional**

**To help the child-**

* Build a healthy self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.
* Build mutual respect, trust and love between children, teacher, and parents.
* Develop a love of learning through provision of daily activities that are success oriented.
* Develop personal attributes of self-control, responsibility, initiative, and independence.

 **Physical Activity**

* Each child shall have an opportunity to participate in active play each day. Active play will take place outside on the appropriate playground or indoors dependent upon appropriate weather conditions. (temperature above 32 degrees.) Children will have the opportunity to participate in 20-30 minutes of playtime each day. Daily schedules of physical activity will be posted in the classroom. Infants will have opportunities in the classroom for physical development on a daily basis according to each child’s development.

**Policies and Procedure**

**Announcements:** Announcements and reminders will be sent through the “Remind: Safe Classroom Communication” App. This can be downloaded from your app store. You can subscribe by texting to: 81010 this message: @66hcc We ask that every parent participate in this so you will stay up to date on all school information.

**Inclement weather:** In case of severe weather we follow the Harris County school system. Please check your local radio and TV announcements. We will also send an alert though the “Remind” App.

**Birthdays:** Please make arrangements in advance for your child’s teacher to celebrate a birthday. All parties will take place in the classroom. You may bring a special snack. You may bring party plates and napkins as well. Please do not bring any decorations, balloons or party favors. Please check with your child’s teacher for special instructions or food allergies.

**Book bags:** Every child should bring a book bag to school each day. They should have a change of clothes, underwear, and socks. This bag will also be used to transport school work and notes. Please keep clothing current with your child’s growth and the changing seasons. LABEL ALL CLOTHIGN AND PERSONAL ITEMS WITH A PERMANET MARKER.

**Toys and Personal Belongings:** We strive to provide adequate developmentally appropriate toys and activities for all of the children. There will be special share days provided in some age groups assigned by the teachers on which the children may bring a special toy from home to share with his/her friends. Please do not allow your child to bring any toys on other days that are not designated as such. Please be mindful of the things your child may pick up and bring into school each day such as coins, small toys, jewelry, or other toys that may be choking hazards as we do not allow them. We are not responsible for lost, broken or stolen items.

**Calendar and Newsletter:** Each month we will send home a calendar listing the themes of each week and any special announcements and our newsletter.

**Clothing:** Children need to wear comfortable, washable, play clothes that are easy to put on and take off. Tennis shoes or other lace up shoes are strongly encouraged.

**Communication:** Any written communication or tuition payments should be placed in an envelope and attached to the outside of your child’s bag. Teachers will place their papers and other items in your child’s bag so please check daily.

**Potty Training:** Potty training is an important and developmentally appropriate issue. We will work closely with parents to insure readiness and proper timing. We will begin helping young children learn proper bathroom habits ***when they show signs of readiness.* Children entering the 4 year old class are highly encouraged to be potty trained before the school year begins.**

**Disciplinary/Guidance Practices:** Discipline is handled in a developmentally appropriate way. Giving positive verbal rewards encourages acceptable behavior. This reinforces a child’s good feeling about his/her behavior and serves as an example to the other children to act in such a way as to receive this praise. Asking a child to stop and think about his/her unpleasant behavior enables the child to work at self-control.

Removal from the group for a period of “time-out” is a tactic used for a child who continually demonstrates unacceptable behavior. This time-out is not a punishment, but rather a time when the child may calm down, remember what behavior the teacher is asking for, and decide for him or herself when he/she is ready to rejoin the group with appropriate behavior. Corporal punishment is not an accepted method of dealing with young children’s behavior. Children will not be hit, slapped, or spanked in any manner while attending Noah’s Ark. If behavior problems persist, the parents are asked to a conference to discuss what may be helpful in motivating their child to behave in an acceptable way. It may be suggested that the child be involved in a behavior modification program, with the parents having the option of being involved in the process.

In instances of biting we take the following steps beyond the above discipline practices.

First, we give immediate attention to comfort and care for the bitten child. After we have cleaned the wound and the child is comforted, we explain to the biter that it hurts the other child when he bites him, show him the bite mark and tell him, “You may not bite.” We then gently remove the biter from the group temporarily, but do not embarrass or humiliate him. An accident report will be sent home with the bitten child and an incident report will be sent home with the bitter. Names of the children are not shared with the parties concerned. If the biting problem continues and proves to be a problem for the class, the following steps are taken: We will keep a staff person or parent within arm’s length of the biter at all times to stop the action as soon as it becomes apparent that it will occur. Children usually bite due to frustration or stress. We study the environment to see what leads to the biting incident. We try to change the environment to lessen the frequency of incidents. If we can find nothing within the environment to cause the continued behavior, we ask for an appointment with the parents to discuss possible solutions. If a child has three incidents of aggression towards another, the aggressor will need to take a temporary break form the program for a minimum of one week. The child may return to the program at such time that the parents and director feel they are prepared to participate without such behavior being likely. If an incident occurs again, it will be at the discretion of the director and the board to decide if the child may continue or will need to be withdrawn for the remainder of the school year. No tuition reimbursement, prorated, or credited for absence due to aggression.

**Dismal of a Child:** Noah’s Ark reserves the privilege of dismissing any child , after entering, he or she seems unable to participate in group experiences, or fees have not been paid.

**Withdrawal:** WRITTEN NOTICE of withdrawal must be given to the Director at least 2 weeks prior to the last day of attendance.

**Carpool**: Carpool in the morning will begin at 8:25 a.m. and will end at 8:40 a.m. The staff will get your child out of the car and walk them into the center. Pick up will begin at 11:25 a.m. and end at 11:40 a.m. Again, we will bring your child to your car and buckle them into their car seat. We ask that you double check they are buckled correctly. You are always welcome to come in at 8:25 and 11:25 for pick up and drop off.

**Early Arrival:**  The center door will not be opened until 8:25 a.m.

**Early Pick-Up:** If your children needs to be picked up before class is over please let your teacher or the director know.

**Late Pick up:** A late fee for each child will be charged each time the parent is late picking up the child.

* For late pick-ups of up to 3 times monthly a fee of $5.00 will be charged for the first 10 minutes. After that, $1.00 per minute will be charged.
* For late pick-ups of 4 times or more monthly the fees will be doubled and the Board of Directors notified. The fees will be due at the beginning of the following week.

**Extended Day:** Once a month we will extended day until 1:00 p.m., Extended day is scheduled for the third Thursday of each month unless there is a holiday. Your child will bring their lunch. The fee is $5.00 and this can be included in your monthly tuition.

**Faculty:** All of our teachers are certified in CPR and are required to have criminal background checks.

**Field Trips:**  We have field trips to Fox’s Pizza and San Marcos. A parent/adult is required to pick up each child, transport them, and stay with them during the duration of the field trip.

**Tuition:**

Two day program:$150

Three day program: $200

Four day program: $250.00

Tuition must be paid in full regardless of services rendered but not used due to sickness, vacation, or other circumstances. Tuition and other fees may be raised at the discretion of the Director and the Board of Directors. Families will be notified in writing regarding any changes in tuition or other fees. We accept checks, cash, or debit/credit cards.

**Due date of tuition payments.**

* Monthly payments of tuition are due on the 1st and are delinquent at

11:30 a.m. on the 10th.

Noah’s Ark does not issue bills for payment, thus payment is due at the above stated time. A $10.00 late fee **per child** for each week missed after due date will be charged on all delinquent accounts. No refunds will be given for services rendered but not used. Accounts that become 2 weeks delinquent after the due date will be subject to the child’s dismissal from the program.

**Return Check Fees**

There will be a $29.00 return check fee on all returned checks. The fee is due upon notification or a $10.00 late fee per week will apply. Cash payments may be required with excessive returned checks**.**

**Certificate of Immunization: *No child will be admitted to the center without a certificate of immunization with a current expiration date****.* This form can be obtained from your pediatrician and must be kept current. There is a 10 day period after the expiration date to submit a new form. **After the 10 day period, children will not be able to attend until a new form is received.** Parents will receive written notice of expiration in advance.

**Illness**

A routine daily health check will be done on all children as they arrive. We will call your emergency contacts and isolate any sick children until they can be picked up. Children who appear with:

* Severe coughing, breathing trouble, yellowish skin or eyes, lethargy or frequent scratching of the skin will not be allowed to stay at school.
* Children with **fever** will not be admitted to the center and must be fever free (without fever reducing medication) for a period of 24 hours before returning to the center. We consider 100.0 degrees or higher as a fever.
* Children with a **rash** cannot return to the center until it is diagnosed and determined non-contagious by the child’s pediatrician. A written notice from the child’s pediatrician must accompany the child upon returning to school.
* Children must be free of **vomiting and/or diarrhea** for 24 hours after the last bout. Diarrhea is defined as having unusually frequent, involuntary stool loss and consisting of mostly water. A doctor’s note stating the child is not contagious may be required before returning to school.
* Children with **chicken pox** cannot return to the center for five to seven days after the blisters appear. All blisters must have scabbed over. When a communicable disease has been introduced to the center such as chicken pox, the Director will notify the parents in writing.
* Children with **hand, foot and mouth** disease may return to the center when they meet the fever policy. Blisters that continue to form or have not healed may require a doctor’s note stating the child is not contagious before returning to school.
* Children with **strep throat** may return to the center 24 hours after antibiotics have begun, as long as they meet the fever policy.
* Children with bacterial **conjunctivitis (pinkeye)** may return to the center 24 hours after treatment has begun. There are 2 types of infections, bacterial and viral. Children who return to school with drainage after treatment may be asked to obtain a doctor’s note stating the child is not contagious.
* Children with **thrush** may return to the center 24 hours after beginning treatment.
* Children with **lice** may return to school after being treated with lice controlling medication such as R.I.D. and with essentially no nits left in the hair. The child will also be checked before entering the classroom and for two weeks after the initial incident. A doctor’s note may be required before entering the center.

Please notify the director if your child develops a contagious disease so that we can inform classmates.

Please list on your child’s personal information form any allergies or medication your child may be on. For the safety of all children, do not send any medications to Noah’s Ark in their bags or otherwise. If your child is on any medications temporarily please mention that to your teacher too.

**Emergency Medical Treatment:** In the event of an accident or illness, parents will be notified immediately. If the center is unable to locate the parents or emergency contact person (s), we will call 911.

**Food Allergies:**  **Written documentation from a doctor is required for allergies to specific food items.**

**Seasonal Parties:** Seasonal parties will be held at the appropriate time. Parents are asked to sign up in their child’s class to help supply food items or drink items. Sign-up sheets will be in your child’s class the first week of school. Listed below are the seasonal parties held each year:

* Fall Festival/ Costume-October
* Thanksgiving Feast- November
* Happy Birthday Jesus-December
* Valentine’s Day- February
* Easter-March/April
* End of the year-May

Our Holidays and teacher workdays are in compliance with the Harris County School calendar.

**Smoking Policy:** FUMC is a smoke free facility. All Noah’s Ark staff and parents are prohibited from smoking on the premises.

**Open Dorr Policy:**  Please feel free to visit us at any time. We love having our parents and grandparents join in the fun! We welcome your involvement!

**Concerns:** Our staff welcomes comments and suggestions. If you, as a parent, feel there is a problem concerning your children, please let your child’s teacher know. She will hear your suggestions or concerns and we will work through the problem. If additional communication is necessary, the problem can be taken to the director. If something concerns the whole center, then please contact the director immediately.

**Registration:** Registration for the following school year will begin the first week in March. Currently enrolled children may register in advance by completing the enrollment form and paying the registration fee. Registration will be open to the public the last week of March and is on a first come first serve basis. Once classes become filled, names will be added to the waiting list. Should space become available at anytime during the year, names will be contacted form the waiting list to fill the space. The registration fee is non-refundable.

**Required Forms:**  The following forms should be completed and returned to the Director by the end of the first day of school:

* Child’s Personal Info form
* Emergency Medical Authorization Form
* Health and emergency Info card
* Pick-Up authorization form
* Immunization form
* Handbook form

**Release:**  The center will only release your child to the people you have listed on your release form. Please list the names of anyone who would have your permission to pick up your child. A photo ID will be required. Any changed due to a special circumstance should be done in writing and only by phone in case of an emergency. Copies of legal documents must be proved to the director before any staff person can prevent non-custodial parents form picking up a child.

**Divorce/Non-Custodial Parents:** It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to inform Noah’s Ark , in writing, of any change in the rights of persons previously authorized to pick up the child. We will follow all court papers regarding custody but bears no responsibility for keeping up with custody and/or visitation arrangements between parents. If the visitation arrangement between the parents requires alternating custodial rights (e.g., each parent has the child every other weekend), such that Noah’s Ark employees could have difficulty remembering which parent has the child on which weekend, the custodial parent must notify the Noah’s Ark on each and every day that the non-custodial parent has the right to pick up the child. A non-custodial parent will be allowed to pick up or visit the child only with the written permission of the custodial parent. In the event of a divorce, all parents who signed the original registration papers remain responsible for tuition and fees. Any provisions to the contrary are up to the parents to work out. We will continue to look to both parents for payment.

**Snack Schedule:** We ask that each family pay a $20.00 snack fee or sign up to bring snacks. We ask that you bring 6 large boxes (or a Sam’s size) of two of the following items: graham crackers, Ritz, Cheese its, vanilla wafers, goldfish, or animal crackers.

**Personal Supplies:**

* Parents are responsible for providing an adequate supply of disposable diapers and baby wipes. Cloth diapers are not allowed.
* Be sure your child has at least one change of clothes. Infants should have 2 or more changes of clothes at the center that is appropriate to the season. Accidents happen, regardless of age. Please label each article of clothing with the child’s first and last name.
* All personal items must be clearly and permanently labeled. Please check these items from time to time as even permanent markings wear off. The center is not responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items.

**Ways Parents Can Help**

* Make sure your child has a good night’s sleep and a nourishing breakfast or bottle before arrival. Monitor your child’s health daily before bringing him/her to school.
* Know your child’s teacher. Work with her concerning any problems that may arrive. Confer with her about your child, but refrain from doing so in his/her presence.
* Do not carry on lengthy conversations with them during times when she will be caring for other children in the class or during carpool. If you need to schedule a conference time please let the teacher and director know.
* Do not carry on lengthy conversations with other adults or teachers during carpool. Safety of the children is top priority and distractions should be minimal.
* Report any special or upsetting experiences which you think will help the teacher to better understand your child.
* Establish in your child a wholesome, friendly attitude toward school.
* Teach your child self-reliance by encouraging him/her to do things for him/herself, allowing him/her plenty of time.
* Do not permit siblings to go into the other child’s room when picking up or dropping off your children.
* Notify the Director of any changes in your address, phone number or release information.
* If you have concerns or problems, please notify the Director.

Thank you for being a part of the Noah’s Ark family!

 We are so glad you are here!

First United Methodist church of Pine Mountain

Noah’s Ark Child Enrichment Center

**I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,**

**whose child(ren)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_is/are enrolled in this current school year, have received a copy of the Parent’s Handbook. I have read and understand the policies and guidelines as described in the handbook, and I agree to abide by them.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature of Parent Date**