

2009-2010

PARENT HANDBOOK



From Small Beginnings Mighty Things Will Come

Lake Travis United Methodist Preschool

1502 Ranch Road 620 North

Austin, TX 78734

(512) 266-2250

Preschool@ltumc.org

Receipt Acknowledgement

Our state license requires that all parents are made aware of the information contained in this Parent Handbook. Once you have read the Parent Handbook, please print off this page and sign the following statement. Please either mail it to the school or bring it to BTS Night or Student Orientation Day.

I hereby acknowledge receiving the 2009-2010 LTUMC Preschool Parent Handbook. I have read it in its entirety and agree to abide by all policies contained herein.

Parent Signature

Child's Name (please print)

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Mission Statement

The mission for LTUMC Young Children's Ministries: *To value all children as gifts from God and to help them grow in "wisdom, stature, and favor". Luke 2:52*

Structure

The Lake Travis United Methodist Church Preschool is an outreach ministry of the church.

The preschool is administered by the Director of Young Children's Ministries who reports to the Director of Discipleship Ministries. The Director of Young Children's Ministries will offer guidance and leadership to all ministry areas involving the young children of the LTUMC.

The Young Children's Ministries Team (YCMT), which is made up of nine or more individuals who are members of or actively participating in LTUMC, will serve as an advisory body to the Director of Young Children's Ministries.

The Young Children's Ministries area is governed by the Lake Travis United Methodist Church Council.

The Office Assistant, Program Assistant and Teachers report directly to the Director of Young Children's Ministries

The Assistant Teachers report directly to their classroom Teacher.

Parent Committee

The Parent Committee serves the preschool by:

- Planning and conducting fundraising events
- Volunteering for special school wide events
- Volunteering as room parent or photography parent
- Supporting staff by volunteering their time and talents
- Organizing staff appreciation activities
- Supporting the welfare of the preschool as needed

Each year the Parent Committee produces a pamphlet outlining various parent volunteer opportunities. We encourage parents to complete this pamphlet based on their interests and ability to participate.

The Preschool Parent Committee reports to the Young Children's Ministries Team.

Curriculum

Our teachers use the Wee Learn curriculum from Lifeways as a foundation for planning their weekly lessons. Wee Learn is a Christian theme based curriculum that meets 100% of the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge Skills) requirements. Our teachers post their lesson plans daily. In addition, teachers provide "Look What We Did Today" notes for parents to review at pick up.

All 4-year-old teachers will follow the four-year-old Kindergarten Preparedness Curriculum Guidelines that have been reviewed by the Lake Travis Independent School District as being age appropriate and meeting the needs of a child heading off to kindergarten.

Our teachers also use a Kindness Curriculum supporting Respect (of one's self, others and materials), Responsibility (doing a job well, and owning one's actions) and Caring (caring for others and God's world).

Preschool Activities

Reading: Teachers will read to the class daily.

Outdoor Play: We will spend time outside daily, weather permitting. Active time outside allows for socialization, release of energy, and enhances large muscle development. Our playground is well equipped and shaded. Since it is not attached to our building, all children are well supervised to and from the playground area.

Chapel: All 2, 3, and 4 year olds will gather for Chapel regularly. Chapel will consist of a simple worship service, which includes songs, prayer and a Christian value lesson.

Music: CD players are available in all classrooms for playing a variety of music throughout the day. The children will have opportunities to sing songs pertaining to their daily routines, play musical instruments, and learn new songs and finger plays.

Art: With children's art, the process is more important than the end product. Daily art activities will allow your child to experiment, create, and express his/her individuality.

Dramatic Play: Utilizing props, songs, and various activities, children will be encouraged to be creative, role play and use their imagination.

Enrollment and Tuition

Registration Fee: There is an annual preschool registration fee per student of \$100.00. This fee is due at the time of registration and is non-refundable.

Tuition: The preschool's tuition is reviewed annually by the YCMT and an annual tuition rate is set. The annual amount is then divided into nine equal payments payable on May 1, September 1, October 1, November 1, December 1, January 1, February 1, March 1, and April 1. The full monthly tuition is due on the 1st of each month, regardless of the number of days your child attends. No adjustments are made for illness or vacations. Missed days cannot be exchanged or made up. If you have any questions regarding your tuition payments or direct deposits, please contact our Accountant, Lisa Keathley at 266-9877 (ext 208) or via email at lkeathley@ltumc.org. Her office is in the church building and she is available several mornings a week.

Leaving/Refunds: If you withdraw your child from the preschool **before the school year begins**, you must notify the preschool in writing, at least 2 weeks prior to the start of school. If this is done, and the spot is filled, you will receive a full tuition refund minus a \$25.00 administrative fee. If you withdraw your child **after school starts**, are current with all payments, and give us one month's notice in writing, we will refund your tuition on a prorated basis minus a \$25.00 tuition fee. To determine the refund amount, we will calculate the number of days your child has used out of the annual tuition versus the number of days your payments have actually paid for. The difference (minus the \$25.00 administrative fee) will be your refund.

Late Payments: Tuition payments are due on the first of each month and will be considered late after 2 PM on the tenth of the month. If the tenth of the month falls on the weekend, then payment is due the Friday before at 2 PM.

Please contact the preschool office prior to the 10th of the month if special arrangements need to be made. A \$10.00 late penalty will automatically be charged to all late payments. We will not carry a late payment past thirty (30) days without previous arrangements.

Scholarships and Discounts: Partial scholarships (not to exceed 50%) may be available for those who cannot afford the monthly tuition. If you would like to be considered for a scholarship, please obtain a Scholarship application form from the Preschool Office. Families enrolling more than one child will receive a \$10 discount off the monthly tuition of the oldest child in the preschool program.

Policies

Parents will be notified of school policies through the Parent Handbook. If any policy changes are made during the school year, Parents will be notified in writing and/or through the preschool newsletter.

Arrival and Departure

Children should enter and leave the building under direct adult supervision. Children will be stopped at the front doors if not accompanied by a parent. All children are to be within arm's length of their parents while in our building. We use the Atomix clock in the foyer for all drop off and pick up times.

ARRIVAL: When you arrive at school, please use the designated parking areas. **Please do not leave younger siblings in the car while dropping off a student.** If you arrive early, please wait with your child in the Foyer until 9:00 AM. At 9:00 AM, please accompany your child to his/her classroom and sign your child in (**leaving any numbers where you can be reached that day in case of an emergency**). When you drop off your child, please make eye contact with his/her teacher and verbally notify the staff that your child is now in their care.

DEPARTURE: Pick-up is from 1:00-1:05 PM. Please call the preschool office (266-2250) if you will be unavoidably delayed. If you need to pick up early, please stop by the office and we will get your child for you. If at all possible, parents should wait until 1:00 PM (dismissal times) to pick up their child.

There is a late pick up charge of \$1.00 per minute after 1:05 PM. Late fee notices will be distributed and charges will automatically appear on your next monthly statement.

Operational Information

Children Served: The preschool is open to all children who are ages 18 months through 4 years as of September 1 of the school year. We welcome children of any race, religion, sex or national origin. Class size will be appropriate to the ages of the children.

Our preschool is staffed with teachers and assistants at ratios far below the State maximum, but not small enough to allow for individual attention for any one student throughout the entire school morning. Prior to the start of school, parents are asked to inform the preschool office if their child requires this individualized one on one interaction.

Discussing your child's needs with your teacher and our Developmental Consultant, conducting observations within the classroom setting and, making interventions in the classroom are all integral parts of this collaborative process. At the conclusion of the process, the Director will communicate the results and recommendations to the parents. It then becomes the parent's responsibility to act upon the recommendations.

It is our goal to have low student/staff ratios. We will try, but cannot guarantee, the following LTUMC suggested ratios:

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>LTUMC suggested Ratios</u>	<u>State Ratio</u>
Toddlers	8:2	9:1
2's	10:2	11:1
3's	12:2	15:1
4's	14:2	18:1

Hours of Operation: The preschool is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM from September to May. If your child is in our Enrichment Program their hours are 9:00AM to 2:00 PM (at 1:00 PM we will take your child to his/her Enrichment class).

On Lake Travis early dismissal or delayed opening days (other than inclement weather), we will remain open.

Severe Weather: In the event of severe weather, we will follow the Lake Travis ISD closing schedule. If LTISD school delays its start, the preschool **will not** open for the day. Please watch the local news channels for closing updates. If Lake Travis schools are dismissed early because of bad weather, you should pick up your child from the preschool IMMEDIATELY as many of our staff members have their own children that they will need to pick up from other schools. Days missed for severe weather closings will NOT be made up.

All students will be exposed to fire and tornado drills to insure safety procedures in case of an emergency.

Student Release Procedures: Teachers and Assistants will only release children to those individuals who have been authorized to pick them up. A record of these individuals is maintained in each child's file. Until the staff can identify, by sight, those listed in the file, **the person should bring their driver's license into the building when picking up as ID proof.**

If you wish to authorize someone who is not listed to pick up your child, please contact the Director (in writing) and she will advise the staff of the change. The staff will then release the child only when that person identifies himself or herself with a picture ID (such as a license).

Child Abuse: We are required, under the Texas family Code, Section 34.01 to report any suspected cases of Child Abuse to the Department of Human Services Protective Services Office and a local or state law enforcement agency. As a parent, you too may contact the agency by calling 1-800-252-5400, or visit their website at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

Health & Safety

Illness: Our state license requires that **we do not admit students who have had an oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or symptoms of illness (diarrhea or vomiting) within the last 24 hours:**

If your child is lethargic, has abnormal breathing, diarrhea, behavior changes, has colored nasal discharge, or symptoms that prevent the child from participating comfortably in activities (including outdoor play), we ask that you keep your child home for the day. Please do not administer medication to your child for the above symptoms and then send him/her to school. If your child is unable to play outside, for whatever reason, please keep him/her at home.

During the course of each day a health check will be conducted, any child exhibiting any of the above signs of potential illness will be removed from the classroom and the parent will be called for prompt pick up.

When dropping off in the morning, please leave contact information where we can find you during the day if your child becomes ill if it is other than your home or cell numbers that have been previously given to us. If you can not be reached we will call the person you designated on your enrolment paperwork at your “designated contact”.

Please contact the preschool office if your child’s doctor diagnoses your child as having a contagious illness. We will notify the class of only the illness (your child’s name will be kept confidential).

MEDICATIONS: The preschool office will need medication instructions in writing from the parent or doctor prior to administering any medications. We will document each dose of medication given. Please stop by the office to pick up a form.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS: Medications must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, a date, directions, and the physician's name. We must administer the medication exactly as stated on the label. We cannot administer expired medications.

NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS: All medications must be labeled with your child's name and the date it was given to us. It too, must be in the original container and administered according to label directions or directions in writing by a health professional.

CHANGE OF CLOTHING: Preschoolers may have toileting accidents or get dirty when participating in various activities. In these situations, they prefer to change into their own clothes. Please send a complete change of clothes (shirt, pants/shorts, underwear and socks) that are appropriate for the season in your child’s backpack when he or she comes to school. Please put the clothes in a zip lock bag labeled with your child’s name.

Since our playground is covered with mulch and sand, we ask that children only wear closed toed shoes with enclosed heels to school. Flip-flop and Crocs make it difficult to run and ride bikes. Sneakers allow children to fully experience the playground in a safe manner.

ALLERGIES: If your child has any allergies, please notify the preschool office. We will provide you with a form that seeks further information regarding the severity of the allergy and its treatment.

EPIPENS: If your child has a severe allergy, which necessitates the use of an Epipen, you will be given forms for your physician to complete which will instruct our staff on what symptoms to look for and when to administer the Epipen. The Epipen is to be supplied by the parent with written instructions. The Epipen will then be kept in a safe location in the classroom or office. Please pick up this form from the Preschool office.

ACCIDENTS: If a child is involved in an accident while at school we will tend to your child and if the injury is minor (scraped knee, small bruise) and the child appears in good health, we will return the child to the activity (and continue to monitor the child). If the child appears distraught, we will telephone the parent and advise them of what has happened. In either case, an Incident Form will be written up and given to the parent at pick up time. If the parent later determines that the child needs to see a physician, the parent should let the preschool office know, (as documentation needs to be sent to DPFS in this situation).

EMERGENCIES: If a medical emergency arises, and you or your emergency contacts are not available, your child's physician will be called. If a child needs to be transported to the hospital a staff member will accompany your child.

IMMUNIZATIONS: All children must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health. The State requires that all records must be on file in the preschool office within one week after the date of admission, and must be signed by a healthcare professional who has examined the child within the past year.

SEAT BELT SAFETY: Senate Bill 113 states that a person commits an offense if the person operates a passenger vehicle transporting a child who is younger than four years of age or less than 36 inches in height, and does not keep the child secured during the operation of the vehicle in a child passenger safety seat system according to the instructions of the manufacturer of the safety seat system. They commit an offense if they allow a child who is at

least five years of age and at least 36 inches in height to ride in the vehicle without requiring the child to be secured by a safety belt.

AFTER SCHOOL PLAY: In an effort to keep children safe, we ask parents to refrain from letting their children play on the rocks and trees in front of the preschool building (near the parking lot) or the deck. If you wish to visit with other parents or have your child play after school, we encourage parents to stop by the preschool office and pick up a key for our younger playground. This way your child can play safely within the confines of the playground while you visit with friends. Children who need to use the bathroom or get a drink must enter through the front door and be accompanied by an adult.

HEAD LICE: Our school has a “no lice/no nit” policy. Our staff may make casual head checks for the detection of lice. These checks usually go undetected by the child. Should lice or nits be detected the child will be removed from the classroom and the parent will be called. The parent will be given a copy of our Head Lice Policy and information on how to treat head lice. When the child returns they must be totally free of lice and nits, and either stop by the office for a head check with a Robi comb, or bring a statement from the child’s doctor saying the child is nit free. In repeated cases, the child must get a signed doctor’s statement.

HEARING AND VISION SCREENING:

The State requires that all children 4 years old or older complete a Vision and Hearing test that shows numbers – not just a “pass/fail” statement. Our preschool will offer these services should parents wish to have the testing done while their child is with us.

General School Visitation

All parents are welcome to visit LTUMC Preschool at any time during regular hours of operation. You are always welcome to observe your child for any length of time from the window in the door. You will be able to observe your child’s natural behavior if your presence is undetected.

In order to ensure the safety of our students the front door is usually locked during preschool hours. If the doors are unlocked, we ask that all visitors observe the following guidelines:

1. All visitors should use the main entrance to the preschool.
2. Parents or other persons bringing items or messages to students must first report to the preschool office.
3. Parents/guardians should come to the office to check students in or out if other than drop off or pick up time (9AM or 1:00 PM).

Two of our schools’ goals are to increase self-reliance and foster individuality. A classroom (with few distractions) allows children to be spontaneous in their responses. This magnifies the learning experience. Therefore, if you would like to observe or visit within a classroom, please speak with your teacher in advance of the visit. We appreciate your cooperation.

The American Dietetic Association has found that children who eat well perform better in school. They have “increased problem-solving ability and better memory, verbal fluency and creativity.” Since children enjoy eating with their friends, eating lunch at school with their peers, teaches children good eating habits, good manners, and good social skills. For that reason, we ask that parents refrain from visiting at lunchtime. If you have extenuating circumstances and must have lunch with your child, please notify your teacher. When you arrive, please check in at the preschool office and your child will be brought to the deck or Fellowship Hall to eat with you. When finished, someone from the preschool office will return your child to his/her classroom to finish out the day. Parents are not permitted to have lunch in the classroom with their child except for “celebration days,” as mentioned below.

Meals and Snacks

DAILY LUNCH: Students are required to bring a lunch from home when they come to school. While teachers are prepared to assist at lunchtime, children should be able to handle the majority of their own lunches. Children seem to enjoy foods they can handle on their own—such as finger foods.

1. In accordance with DPFS standards, we ask that lunches be nutritious and include a variety of food groups. Please use sweets, salts and fats in moderation. Lunchables and other similar products are discouraged. Children will be encouraged to finish all of their “healthy” foods before eating any treat you may send.
2. Please send a beverage with your child’s lunch each day (100% juice, milk, water). Thermoses with flip top lids are much easier for small children to handle than juice boxes/pouches.
3. We also ask that parents not send lunches that have to be heated or that are messy in nature.
4. The following foods have caused choking in children, (particularly those under the age of three):

Hotdogs, corn, raw carrots, peas, peanut butter, nuts, grapes & candy

The preschool’s staff reserves the right to refrain from serving any of the above to your child.

Due to possible allergic reactions, our students are not allowed to exchange food with other students, teachers or parents. Your child is asked to eat what he/she brings to school and not to accept food from anyone else.

We are teaching students to eat healthy and exhibit self-control. To help in this regard, we ask that parents **not** bring fast food lunches to school for their children. It is hard for one child to eat the sandwich mom packed for him while his classmate eats a hamburger and fries from a fast-food restaurant. State regulations require us to list the food we give to our students each day. If you wish to bring a special healthy lunch to all children in the class, please give your child’s teacher advance notice so she can obtain parent approval prior to the day you want to bring the special lunch in.

SNACKS: Parents will take turns providing their child’s class with a morning snack. Your teacher will let you know when you are responsible for bringing the snack. You will receive a reminder from your child’s teacher prior to the week you are to provide the snack. **If you forget to bring snacks or if your snacks are inappropriate, you will be billed \$5 per day for the preschool to provide a suitable alternative.**

Snacks should be low in sugar (no cookies, cupcakes, doughnuts, candy, etc.) and contain natural ingredients. We will only serve the following beverages; 100% fruit juice, milk or water. Please note however, both our teaching staff and our students prefer water. Please make certain snacks are not choking hazards.

Since LTUMC Preschool does not provide the snacks, we are not responsible for their nutritional value or for them meeting your child’s daily food requirements. We like to expose our students to a variety of foods that are nutritious, flavorful, and appealing to the senses.

We will notify parents if there is a food allergy in their child’s classroom. If your child has food allergies or dietary limitations, you should provide a separate daily snack for your child.

The preschool will furnish napkins. Cold water is always available. If necessary, there is a refrigerator in the kitchen for your use. Please take any leftover snack items and drinks home at the end of the week.

We will post the snack your child has each day so you will be aware of what your child has eaten.

BIRTHDAYS: At the discretion of the teacher, parents may bring a special treat to school, in order to celebrate their child’s birthday during snack time. Suggested snacks include **muffins, cookies, fruit or donut holes.** Please do not send cakes or cupcakes with lots of icing. Arrangements with the teacher should be made 7 days ahead of the birthday so that the snack will not interfere with anything else being done on that day in the classroom. Birthdays may only be celebrated during snack time.

Please do not send gifts or goodie bags. These should be distributed at your home birthday parties.

You may distribute birthday invitations to the students in your child's class cubby's **only** if all students in the classroom are invited. If this is not the case, we ask that you use the postal service

CELEBRATION LUNCHES: LTUMC Preschool has set aside special times and holidays in order to allow parents to eat with their children. In order to handle the volume of families, special celebration lunches have been designated throughout the year. You are encouraged to join us during the designated parent/student lunch times.

Communications

NEWSLETTERS: We will issue a newsletter monthly that will highlight events and important information regarding our preschool activities. We will post notification of the newsletter on the front Preschool Board and email notification that is on our website at www.ltumc.org/preschool. Copies of the newsletter will be available in the preschool office if you do not have an email address or prefer a hard copy.

COMMUNICATING WITH TEACHERS: Since we want our teachers to be attentive to all students, we ask parents not to engage teachers in lengthy conversations at drop off or pick up. If you need to speak to your teacher, please ask them to call you after hours, or schedule a meeting. All teachers and the Director are available by appointment, for meetings or for after hours telephone conferences.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES: Parent/Teacher conferences for Twos will be scheduled in the spring. Teachers of three and four year olds will schedule fall and spring parent/teacher conferences. The fall conference is our opportunity to hear from parents on how they feel their child is adjusting to school. During the spring conference, we will share your child's progress with you.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES: It is important that an open channel of communication exists between our Teaching Staff, Parents and Director.

The Preschool Director's door is always open and she is available to speak with and hear parent's concerns. She will return all parent phone calls within 24 hours.

Any parents with a teacher complaint/concern will be encouraged to discuss their concerns with the teaching staff first. If they choose not to, they are encouraged to speak with the Director.

If a parent approaches a YCMT board member with a concern or complaint, the parent will be redirected to the Director for handling. The Director will contact the parent within 24 hours.

Any parent with a concern or complaint is encouraged to pick up a copy of our Complaint Process from the preschool office. This form outlines the steps that the Director will take to handle the complaint.

Guidance & Discipline

The policy of Lake Travis United Methodist Church Preschool is for staff to be loving, accepting, and supportive of all children placed in our care.

It is our goal to help each child develop skills necessary to handle a variety of situations.

Discipline will be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding and,
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control

- Positive in nature and encourage self control

Staff will only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which will include:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing on unacceptable behaviors
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations using positive statements, and
- Using brief supervised separation from the group when appropriate for the child's age and development (limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age).

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES: Misbehavior is natural and somewhat expected in preschool age children. In cases of continual misbehavior, the teacher will state the expected behavior, in positive terms and will repeat these expectations a reasonable number of times.

If the misbehavior is aggressive or if the child appears to be over stimulated, he/she will be taken aside and asked to sit away from the group for some quiet time. We may use this opportunity to talk to the child about the "choices" he or she has made.

If quiet time in the classroom is not effective, the child may be taken to sit quietly in the office for a short interval. Parents will be notified if their child has visited the preschool office.

When frequent misbehaviors occur, the teacher may seek guidance from our staff Developmental Consultant or the Director. The teacher will meet with the parent to discuss a plan of action that will help the child within the classroom setting.

If misbehavior has resulted in injury to another child, an Incident Form will be completed and given to both parents. (Please refer to Accidents in the Parent Handbook).

BITING and HITTING POLICY

If a child has bitten or hit another child, both parents will receive an Incident Report.

Biting and hitting are common behaviors in young children. However, on occasion these behaviors become frequent. The Young Children's Ministries Team of LTUMC has established procedures to help us monitor these situations. This policy includes such areas as seeking parental information, monitoring the behavior, shadowing the child, and, if deemed necessary, temporary removal from the program.

If a child hits or bites, their parents will be given a copy of our Biting/Hitting Policy.

After School Enrichment

Optional after school enrichment classes are available for children who have turned three on or before September 1 of the school year. .

Enrichment classes offer students an opportunity to experience specific activities that would not be part of a typical preschool day. Classes meet once a week from 1:00-2:00 PM. There will be a late pick up charge of \$1.00 per minute after **2:05 PM**.

Registration for Enrichment classes will begin at Back To School Night on a first come first serve basis. The Registration fee is \$15.00 per class. Parents should be prepared to pay the Registration fee and the first semester's tuition for their Enrichment class. If, at a later date, a parent wishes to withdraw their child, a refund will be issues for unused classes (minus a \$25 administrative fee) if we are given 2 weeks written notice and we are

able to fill the spot. Students enrolled in the Fall Semester will have first choice for enrollment in the Spring semester.

If the school has to close due to inclement weather, there will be no Enrichment refunds or make up days.

Helpful Hints

Please label all items with your child's name.

- * No valuable possessions should be brought to school.
- * We discourage children from bringing their own personal toys to school. Please tell your child you will have their toy in the car for him/her to have after pick up.
- * We ask that your child not bring weapons or weapon-like toys, or super hero action figures to school as aggressive behavior is discouraged.
- * Parents of toddlers and 2's in diapers are required to provide enough disposable diapers (the kind with tab fastenings) to last for the day.
- * Your child will need a sturdy bag that will hold notes, artwork and lunch boxes. It should be labeled with your child's name and be easy for him/her to manage and recognize.
- * Please do not send your child to school with open toed shoes or flip flops.

Our website, www.ltumc.org/preschool contains additional information about our preschool.