LITTLE LAMBS PARENT HANDBOOK

Agnus Dei Lutheran Church
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Welcome to the Little Lambs Preschool! We are pleased to provide you with the following information with hopes that many of your questions regarding our preschool program will be answered. The purpose of this handbook is to inform parents about our policies, procedures and curriculum. This material will help as you get ready for preschool and also serve as a reference during the year.

THE STATEMENT OF MISSION: The mission of Little Lambs Preschool, through the guidance of Agnus Dei Lutheran Church, shall be to provide a Christian based, high quality early childhood program for the children and parents in the Gig Harbor community. It shall be dedicated to the ministry of Christ and shall serve all people without regard to their race, ethnicity, gender, religious history, social or economic background. As a congregation that is sensitive to the needs of its community, the preschool shall be a visible, active ministry of the church, reflecting its commitment to the social, physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth of children and their families in our community.

OUR PHILOSOPHY: Agnus Dei Lutheran Church views children and families as a precious resource, given by God. The purpose of Agnus Dei's Little Lambs Preschool is to provide a Christian early childhood setting in which two, three, four and five year olds are helped to grow, learn, and develop as God's children, physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually.

The ***goals*** of the preschool are:

- to provide an environment that supports the growth of the whole child in developmentally appropriate ways;
- to help children experience and learn about God's love through Jesus Christ;
- to encourage children to acquire self-esteem, compassion for others, a sense of community, and a spirit of sharing;
- to foster creativity, exploration, self-discipline, and a love of learning;
- to assist parents in guiding the development of their children;
- to encourage the spiritual development of the entire family in this or other local congregations.

THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

What we believe… Children acquire knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which they live through playful interaction with objects and people. Young children learn by doing.

Faith development… Spirituality touches all aspects of the preschool program. The atmosphere, curriculum, and interactions are shaped by the love of Christ. Through everyday activities children learn about and experience God's love. Through classroom activities and relationships young children can:

a. see themselves as God's children.
b. enjoy worship activities.
c. feel secure in God's love.
d. see their world as God's creation and grow in a desire to care for it.
e. respond to God's love by caring for others

Curriculum goals… The Little Lambs preschool curriculum provides a wide variety of age-appropriate activities that foster the intellectual, social and physical development of young children. Monthly and weekly themes provide a focus for these activities. Areas emphasized include building a healthy self-concept, independence, problem solving and intellectual exploration.

Hours… The three-year-old classes meet on Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 to 12:00. The four/five-year old classes meet Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; from 9:30 until 12:00. The Pre-Kindergarten class meets on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9:30-1:00.

The people who serve you… Our teaching staff consists of Christian people qualified in early childhood education who are experienced in working with the preschool age child. All staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR. Our teaching staff is maintained on a ratio of one teacher for every seven children. The Preschool Board of Directors is made up of members from the church congregation. The director serves as a non-voting liaison between the preschool and the board and the pastor from Agnus Dei.

School calendar… The first day of school for the children in September will begin during the first full week after Labor Day and the last day of school will be the first week in June. The Little Lambs Preschool observes the same holiday schedule as the Peninsula public schools, except for early dismissal.

Program components…

1. A **flexible program** with a **daily routine**. Daily activities include guided learning time, choosing time, creative play periods and circle time.

2. The program is planned to provide the materials and equipment which will invite creative activity and **stimulate natural curiosity**.

3. A balance of **individual and group activities** along with both quiet and vigorous activities are incorporated into the preschool schedule.

4. **Nutritious snacks**, which provide opportunities for conversation, table manners, and cooking experiences.

5. **Science experiences** which allow for the exploration of our physical world.

6. Opportunities with various **art media** (finger painting, paste, clay, etc.) that focus on the process of experimentation, self-expression, and enjoyment.

7. A **dramatic play area** (dress-up, puppets, playhouse, etc.) to allow the children to develop their imagination, learn about the world around them and for self-expression.

8. A **manipulative area** for fine motor and thinking skills development.

9. A **block/construction center** for the development of problem solving skills, cooperation, as well as imagination.

10. **Outside play area** to encourage physical development, exploration and dramatic play. Discovery activities such as sand and water play also occur outside.

11. A **book/listening center** provides an environment for reading and listening activities.

12. Everyday activities and **chapel** provide opportunities to hear about God and Jesus, to respond to God's love in prayer, praise and worship.

Eligibility…

1. Enrollment in the three-year-old class requires that the child be three by August 31 of the current school year. Children in the four/five-year old classes must be four by August 31 of the current year. Pre-K children must be 4 by August 31 prior to the start of school to be eligible for fall classes.

2. Children should be toilet trained in the 3's, 4/5's and Pre-K classes. Exceptions will be made on an individual basis after a conference with the director.

3. Children will be enrolled on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Early registration is available for current school families and church members. If the class is full, the child's name may be put on a waiting list. Each class will have, but is not strictly limited to 12 students for the 3's, 14 students for the 4/5's and Pre-K classes.

4. The following forms must be on file prior to the first day of school:

   - **Registration form and fee**
   - **Medical release form**
   - **Certificate of immunization status form**
   - **Tuition agreement form**
   - **Authorized Child Pick-up Sheet**

Tuition policy… The Little Lambs Preschool operates as a self-supporting educational non-profit agency of Agnus Dei Lutheran Church and is financed by tuition receipts. A 5% discount will be given to families with more than one child attending the preschool program. **Payments are due on the first school day of each month and are to be remitted by mail or in person at the church office. A late fee of $25 will be assessed if payment is received after the 10th.** Tuition fees cannot be adjusted for vacations, holidays, sick days, snow days, etc. except under extraordinary circumstances. Registration fee for all classes is $75. This fee is due at registration and is not refundable if the parents withdraw the child.

Withdrawal…If for any reason you need to withdraw your child from the Little Lambs Preschool, a two-week notice (preferably written) should be given. Parents who withdraw their child but fail to provide notice will still be liable for the two-week's tuition. Any unused tuition will be refunded if the Preschool has requested that the child withdraw.

Termination policy… The Little Lambs Preschool reserves the right to terminate enrollment under the following conditions:

1. Unpaid fees.

2. Behavior problems that endanger the safety of other children in the program or require an unreasonable amount of adult supervision. (Child Dismissal policy available upon request.)

3. Inability to resolve disagreement with parent about policy procedures. Parents will use the grievance process as follows:

    a. Tell teacher/director about concern.
    b. If unsatisfied with response, speak with Preschool Board Representative.
    c. If Board Representative cannot resolve difficulty, ask for an opportunity to present concern to entire Preschool Board.
    d. Preschool Board will make final resolution about problem.

** Please be aware that our director is responsible for the daily operation of the preschool and is an excellent problem solver.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health policies…

1. All children must have had a physical examination within the past year and up-to-date immunizations. Please return the completed Medical forms prior to the first day of school.
2. Medications cannot be administered by school personnel.
3. **For the protection of all children, your child should be kept at home** if he/she shows any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours: *a fever, diarrhea or vomiting, any undiagnosed rash, severe cough, nasal discharge or discharging eyes or ears*. The child must not return until symptom free without medication for 48 hours.
4. Any child or adult who has contacted any communicable disease (conjunctivitis, chicken pox, strep throat, etc.) or condition (listed above) shall not attend school until symptom-free for 48 hours.
5. If a child becomes ill during the day, she/he will be isolated in the classroom or office and remain there under adult supervision until the parent or authorized person arrives to take the child home. If the parent cannot be reached, the school will call the emergency contacts listed on the registration form. ***Be sure that you have an up-to-date phone number for each person you list.***
6. If a child has any of the following COVID symptoms, they may not attend:
   - Fever above 100.4
   - 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

Emergencies…

1. A signed and dated medical consent form ***must*** be on file at school so that the teacher/director has the authority to call a doctor or hospitalize your child if it is impossible to reach you or the contacts listed on the registration form. It is crucial that you notify us immediately regarding any change of address or telephone number.
2. In case of accident, the Little Lambs Preschool staff will follow the procedure outlined below:

a. If serious accident occurs, staff will call 911 for aid; first aid will be administered.
b. Parents will be notified immediately.
c. Paramedics will treat and transport child, if necessary, to medical treatment.
d. If child's health or safety is not endangered, parents will be notified and asked to come and transport child to medical treatment.

3. If we must call an ambulance or paramedics, you will be expected to assume responsibility for any expense not covered by our insurance.
4. An accident report will be filled out to advise the parents of circumstances of the injury.

Accident Report… An accident report will be filled out whenever an accident occurs or a child is injured. Accidents include serious falls, cuts, abrasions, bites, or other injuries. You will be given a copy when you pick up your child.

Pick-up and drop off… This year we will be using Curbside/Sidewalk drop off and pick up. You may either drive up or park and walk up. We will check your child in and bring them in the building. At pick up, we will reverse the process. **Please bring and pick up your child on time.** A child will not be dismissed with anyone except a parent or persons named on the registration form as emergency contacts. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, the staff must be given notification from the parent for that specific day and time. Permission over the phone is discouraged, but may be accepted under certain circumstances. Any person that the staff has not met or seen before will be asked to show picture identification.

Snow Policy… We will follow Peninsula School district closures. If the School District start times are delayed, classes will be canceled. Snow days will not be rescheduled.

Child abuse reporting law… The Little Lambs Preschool staff is required by Washington State law and licensing to report to the police or Child Protective Services any instance where there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Confidentiality… Confidentiality is maintained at all times with your child's records. Records are open only to the parent, teacher/director, or Preschool Board unless permission is given by the child's parent or legal guardian. No exceptions.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY

What is discipline? Discipline is the process of encouraging children to learn to control themselves. Discipline is setting limits and correcting misbehavior. Discipline also is encouraging children, guiding them, helping them feel good about themselves, and teaching them how to think for themselves.

The ***goals of the positive discipline*** approach used in the Little Lambs Preschool program are to help children:

- ***Learn to make good choices.***
- ***Learn problem-solving skills.***
- ***Learn basic human values of respect, trust, responsibility, honesty, and caring for others.***

Following is a list of practices consistent with these goals:

1. The prevention of problems is an important aspect of discipline in the preschool classroom. Staff regularly evaluates the classroom environment for the prevention of discipline problem areas.
2. Staff carefully plans developmentally appropriate activities and routines so that the individual and developmental needs of each child can be met.
3. Positive discipline involves establishing rules. The staff sets appropriate guidelines for behavior which ensures order and sets boundaries for interactions.
4. Simply redirect the child's attention to get them involved with something else.
5. Give children choices whenever possible. This shows them that we respect and trust them in their abilities to make decisions and to have control over their behavior.
6. The positive actions of the children are noticed, encouraged, and praised.
7. Children are given ample warning before changing activities.
8. Children are taught problem-solving skills by examining what has happened and searching for possible solutions with staff members.
9. When disciplining, the staff is positive and considers the child's age, experience, understanding, developmental needs, home environment, etc.
10. When confronted with negative behavior, the staff follows the philosophy of "loving firmness". The child is treated with respect and love and separated from the rejection of the negative behavior.
11. Children experiencing difficulty are removed from over stimulating situations and given time to calm down or gain control in a quiet, more private space.
12. If a behavior problem persists, the teacher will confer with the parent and determine how we may solve the problem for the best benefit of all parties (1. Looking for underlying factors/fears; 2. Seeking professional evaluation).
13. Our program philosophy, policy and the law prohibit spanking or other forms of corporal punishment.
14. Occasionally problems develop to the extent that they become extreme and a child may be asked to withdraw from preschool.

Field trips… We believe that children can benefit from being exposed to varied experiences within the community. Field trips offer children a way to explore and learn more about the world around them. The program staff will develop field trips which support and enrich the program's objectives. Parents will be informed of field trips in advance through newsletters and class calendars. There may be fees in addition to regular tuition to cover costs of certain field trips. ***Parents are required to accompany their children on field trips. It is Little Lambs Policy that parents transport their child to and from our field trip destinations. Field trips usually take the place of a full day of school.***

Dress… **Children are encouraged to wear washable and comfortable play clothes and tennis shoes.** Remember that we do provide dirt, sand, water, mud, paint, and glue; all those messy things so loved and needed by young developing children. Please label outer garments and other possessions (i.e. backpacks) with your child's name. We play outside every day that it is not raining. Jewelry can cause problems (w/handwashing, breaking, getting lost, etc) and is dangerous on the playground so please leave it at home.

Toys… The preschool program provides the children with ample equipment and toys and therefore asks that children not bring toys to school. The exception to this rule is when your child is the "Child of the Day". On that day your child may bring an item to share; however, we ask that no toy guns or other toys of destruction be brought to school.

Separation… The first few weeks at preschool will probably produce some anxiety for you and your child. Your child will appreciate your loving reassurance that you will return at the appointed time. The teachers are empathetic to your feelings and to your child's feelings. Our staff is trained to be alert and aware of your child's reactions to his/her environment and will make every effort to help him/her adjust as easily as possible. Tears usually last only for moments.

Potty Training… Children are required to be potty trained at the beginning of the school year. The exception is for the 2 ½'s class. While the occasional accident is developmentally appropriate, daily accidents will need to be addressed by parents.

Celebrations

Child of the Day

Each month of the school year you will receive a calendar of your child's class activities. This calendar will include special events and special days. Child of the Day shown with your child's name and an asterisk (*) next to it (example: *Jane).He or she will sit in the "Child of the Day" chair during circle, be the line leader, and choose the prayer used during snack for that day. They also bring one item to show and tell.

One Special Day a Year

We will celebrate your child's "Special Day," during the school year. This special birthday day may or may not coincide with the child's birthday. This is a day for each child to feel extra special and be recognized individually as an important member of class. We are hoping you will become involved with your child when it is his or her turn to be the Special Person by participating in the occasion as much as possible.

Your child's special day should begin at home, be enthusiastic about their special day at school. Together create their special person poster. You may also bring a special snack, please bring only store bought items.

Special Person Poster: This is a fun project using photos, drawings and pictures from magazines to illustrate your child's life. Please involve your child as much as possible in the creation to make them feel truly special. If you need suggestions to get started, please ask.

Holidays… The Little Lambs Preschool does celebrate holidays in a Christian manner. In the ***autumn*** we emphasize a harvest theme and celebration of our Heritage. During the ***winter*** months, we spend the Advent season telling the Christmas Story and preparing the children for the "Birthday of Baby Jesus". Valentines Day is celebrated as a time to show special love. At preschool, we have the opportunity to help the children show love by making special cards for family and friends. We will talk about family love and God's love for us. In the ***spring***, we talk about the new life that is coming in the form of flowers, baby animals, and also our new life in Christ. We encourage your participation, questions, and suggestions in all of our celebrations. The monthly newsletter will give you more detailed information as each holiday approaches.

Becoming involved in your child's preschool program…

Volunteering: Volunteers enrich our preschool program. By volunteering, *YOU* will expand and individualize your child's program activities. Here is a list of ways that you can help:

- Assist in the classroom
- Help with trip planning, organization, or driving
- Provide transportation for a field trip
- Help with holiday celebrations
- Build toys or equipment
- Paint, sew, bake
- Collect natural or recyclable materials
- Contribute to themes children are currently exploring (fossils from home, books, stamp collections, etc.
- Share your cultural heritage or travel experiences in cooking projects clothing, songs, photographs, books, or other special objects.
- Create teaching materials
- Contribute your time and skills to special projects such as art, music, dance, cooking, weaving, woodworking, etc.
- Host a coffee for parents
- Share a career or hobby
- Plant flowers or help maintain outdoor play areas
- Contribute to the monthly newsletter
- Help with fund-raising

Be a Class Representative… The Class Representative will volunteer or be appointed in the fall and represent their class. This person will attend monthly meetings and shall act as a liaison between the parents and the preschool. Your participation as class representative can help shape the direction of the program by assisting in the decision-making process. You will bring valuable insights and firsthand knowledge based on the needs and experiences of the children in the program. We need and want to know what the expectations and attitudes of the parents are. We invite you to consider taking on this role as a means of active involvement in your child's program.

Responsibilities of the Parents

1. See that your child has a good night's sleep and a balanced breakfast.

2. Dress your child in sturdy shoes and comfortable play clothes.

3. Keep your child home if she/he is sick and notify the office.

4. Bring and pick up your child on time. The staff is busy preparing for your child's school day and is not able to devote their complete attention to early arrivals. If you're late, children worry. Please notify the church office if an emergency arises so that we can reassure your child.

5. Notify the staff of any home situation which may affect the child's attitude or performance in preschool.

6. Provide and maintain current and complete information about your child's development, medical history, and emergency care.

7. Make sure tuition payments are received on time.

8. Look for and read written material sent home with your child. Return necessary forms or requested items in a timely fashion.

9. Take every opportunity to enjoy and participate in your child's first school experience.

10. Provide a nutritious snack for your child's class when they are "*Child of the Day" and one item for them to share (show and tell).

Responsibilities of the Staff

1. Help your child experience and learn about God's love.

2. Provide for the safety of your child in a warm and accepting atmosphere.

3. Evaluate each child's skills, interests, knowledge, and social development and provide for appropriate activities.

4. Follow each child's progress and provide for opportunities for this information to pass between teacher/director and parents.

5. Notify the parents of any situation relating to their child's performance at school.

Our sponsor...

AGNUS DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

10511 Peacock Hill Avenue NW
Gig Harbor, Washington

253- 851-6222

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

John the Baptist excitedly pointed out Jesus to the disciples gathered around him and recognized him as the Son of God. Followers have been seeking after Jesus ever since John's witness: *"Look, the Lamb of God!"* (Luke 1:35-42)

Agnus Dei means *LAMB OF GOD* **in Latin.**

Agnus Dei Lutheran Church, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, was organized in October of 1979. The original building was completed in November of 1988 and expanded in 2011. The preschool was established in September 1995

WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

Sunday Mornings:

8:30 am & 11:00 am - Worship with Holy Communion
9:40 am - Sunday School and Adult Forum (education time)