



Parent Handbook

**San Marcos Lutheran Church
Children's Center
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Welcome

Welcome to our San Marcos Lutheran Church Children's Center Family! We are delighted to meet you and are blessed that your child will be attending preschool with us. This Handbook describes our program and policies in more detail; it is designed to help you understand our program better and answer any questions you may have. During these important early years of learning, it is critical that we work together to ensure your child has the best possible preschool experience and we are so looking forward to getting to know you and your child better.

About Us

History of Our Preschool: San Marcos Lutheran Church Children's Center opened its doors in September 2003 as a result of a generous donation from Keith and Jean Kellogg. Keith is the grandson of W.K. Kellogg, founder of the Battle Creek, Michigan cereal giant bearing his last name. In addition to providing the seed monies to support our program start-up, both Keith and Jean's philanthropic efforts have had a major impact on college campuses with the establishment of Cal Poly University, Pomona, the graduate school of management at Northwestern University, the school of international studies at Notre Dame and more recently on the campus of Cal State San Marcos. Many science and cancer centers, research institutes, and even an art gallery bear the name of Keith and Jean's generous spirit. We feel very blessed that our through their gift and over 10 years of extremely generous support by the congregation of San Marcos Lutheran Church, preschool families and donors in our surrounding community, our preschool has continued to grow and thrive. Our preschool is nationally accredited by the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association.



Mission Statement: Learn Live and Share the Love of God!

Our goal is to provide a loving and nurturing educational environment for young children. As a ministry of San Marcos Lutheran Church, we also support the mission statement of the church: "To know, accept and live the love of God and share it with others."

Philosophy: We are a developmental, play-based, Christian preschool. We believe that young children learn best through hands-on, play-based experiences. This philosophy is endorsed by our accreditation board, the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) and by the National Association for the Education of

Young Children (NAEYC). Our activities and materials are “developmentally appropriate” for young children. This means that the teachers and support staff take into consideration the age, individual development and interest level of the children when planning lessons and activities. Children are encouraged and taught to interact appropriately with their peers, develop problem solving skills, and work independently in the school environment. We believe that we are all God’s children and that we show our love for God by being kind and helping others. The children’s faith is nourished through Bible stories, songs, prayers, and Children’s Chapel Time. Our school environment supports learners across a wide range of abilities, developmental levels, language and cultural backgrounds, and learning styles. Through their learning experiences the children gain knowledge, confidence, independence and compassion for others that will help prepare them for future school and life experiences.

Developmental Goals: We plan goals and activities for the children based on their individual learning styles, interests and skill levels. We help children learn and grow in the following areas:

- Social (making friends, sharing, working with others, feeling comfortable in school)
- Emotional (developing independence and self-control, experiencing pride in one’s work, having a positive attitude toward life and learning)
- Cognitive (becoming a confident learner, solving problems, asking questions, trying out one’s own ideas)
- Linguistic (building a strong vocabulary, expressing ideas and feelings, gaining auditory and phonemic awareness)
- Physical (using small and large muscle groups, practicing eye-hand coordination, developing writing skills)
- Spiritual (knowing Jesus as a friend and helper, learning Bible stories, talking to God through prayer, helping others)

Staff: We are dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment in which children can create, explore and learn. Our Center Director, Anne McDaniel, was awarded the 2005 Lay Leader of the Year for the Pacifica Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association for her work in establishing our preschool and she served on the accreditation team, along with the former Director, Karen Freeman. Anne has a B.S. in Business from Cal Poly Pomona, an A.A. in Journalism and is Director certified in Early Childhood Education. She has served as the Pre-K Teacher, Outdoor Teacher and Teacher Assistant for the preschool and prior to that, Anne was an Assistant Director of Housing at UCLA, responsible

for on campus housing, conference services, housing security, housekeeping and building maintenance. She also served as a sexual harassment, workplace safety and diversity trainer. The preschool staff has a combined total of 75 years of teaching experience and are enrolled in or have completed the requisite Child Development classes per state guidelines. The director and teachers are current with CPR and First Aid training. Before being hired, all staff members were fingerprinted and received Criminal and Child Abuse Record Clearances.

Sample Daily Schedule: We follow a consistent daily routine as we find that this helps children know what is expected and gives them a sense of time. The specific daily schedule will vary according to your child's classroom, but a typical day could include the following activities:

8:00 - 8:45	Early Arrivals: Discovery Room
8:45 - 9:30	Language and Literacy Circle
9:30 - 10:15	Children's Creek (outdoor curriculum)/Discovery Room (indoor curriculum)
10:15 - 10:30	Snack
10:30 - 11:00	Bible Story and Music at Creek Amphitheater (Chapel in the church on Wed/Thurs)
11:00 - 11:45	Discovery Room (indoor curriculum)/Children's Creek (outdoor curriculum)
11:45 - 12:00	Closing circle and prayer
12:00 - 1:00	Extended Care Lunch Bunch

Discipline: We realize that young children are often seeing or doing something for the first time. They are not always aware of how their words and actions may affect others. We work with the children to develop awareness of their own feelings as well as the feelings of others. We model appropriate and respectful words and actions to help the children learn how to communicate and interact successfully with their peers.

Developmental Profile: Each day, while the children are participating in the program and activities, the teachers are making observations about how and what the children are learning and doing. Skill levels, strengths, and goals are noted and used to help create individual and group lesson plans. This information is updated throughout the year and will be used to help describe your child's progress and learning at the Parent Conference in the spring. If the teacher has any concerns about how your child is learning, she may ask to meet with you earlier in the year in order to gather more information and decide on a course of action. If you have any

concerns about how or what your child is learning, please do not hesitate to let the teacher and/or Director know as soon as possible so that we can address your concerns promptly.

Special Learning Needs: Our preschool environment is designed to accommodate a wide range of learning styles and developmental levels. However, this school functions as a general educational facility and our teachers are not trained or certificated in the areas of special needs with regard to learning, development or behavior. Our state licensing regulations limit the number of children who can be supervised by a teacher. If your child has needs that require constant individual attention that then may limit our ability to legally and safely provide supervision for the other children in a class or group. In addition, we may not be able to provide the specialized learning environment that your child may need. We may ask in such cases that you seek outside help for your child's specialized needs and/or that your child exit our program.

Health and Safety

Accidents and Incidents: Despite our best efforts to keep children from harm, accidents sometimes happen. It is our policy to inform parents whenever their child experiences an accident (such as a fall or a bump) or incident (bee sting, splinter, hit or bitten by another child) that requires medical or staff attention. In case of a more severe accident we will attempt to contact the parents immediately by phone and/or call 911 for immediate assistance if needed.

We also inform parents any time their child has initiated an incident such as hitting, biting, kicking, throwing objects, or other extreme behaviors that go beyond normal age or developmental expectations. Out of concern for the safety and well-being of the other children and staff members, your child may be asked to leave our preschool program if there are repeated incidents.

Allergies and Special Diets: Please inform us in writing of any allergies (food or non food-related) or special dietary needs that your child has. We want to work with you to ensure the safest environment possible for your child, but note that **WE ARE NOT A PEANUT FREE FACILITY**. Please be advised that we will consider each case on an individual basis but that we may not be able to accommodate severe allergic conditions.

Emergency Evacuation: In case of an unexpected event such as fire or earthquake where we would not be able to go inside the preschool building, we will relocate upstairs to the church upper parking lot or up on the field. **Please keep your contact information current so that we can reach you in the event of an emergency.**

Hand washing: We teach the children from their first day at preschool to wash their hands after using the toilet, after wiping their nose, after playing outside, before eating, and whenever else needed. We know that good hand washing helps prevent the spread of germs and therefore it is an important part of our curriculum. All children should wash their hands upon arrival at school and also before they leave for the day.

* In order to ensure the privacy of our children as they wash their hands and use the restroom at drop off and pick-up time, parents are asked to wait outside the children's restroom area, away from the entry. A teacher is always present when children are using the facilities to assist as needed.

Health screening: All registered children must provide a health clearance from their physician within 30 days of starting preschool. Parents will receive a Health Clearance Form in the enrollment packet but we have more in the office if you need another. Children who do not have health clearance within 30 days may be asked not to return to school until the clearance is provided.

Immunizations: All registered children must show proof of immunizations *before* they start school. Required immunizations for preschool children in California include: 4 DTAP, 3 Polio, 3 Hib, 3 Hepatitis B, 1 MMR and 1 Varicella. A TB test will be required if risk factors are indicated by the physician on the health clearance form. Effective January 1, 2014 the State of California Assembly Bill 2109 requires a new process for obtaining exemptions of the required immunizations. If you are requesting a waiver from any or all required immunizations on the basis of personal beliefs, form CDPH (California Department of Public Health) 8262 **must** be on file in the office. Please see the Director if you need more information regarding form CDPH 8262.

Medication Policy: We are happy to help administer physician-prescribed medication to your child when needed. All medicine **MUST BE** in the original container which includes the dosage and frequency as prescribed by your child's physician. Parents must bring the medicine into the preschool office and fill out a Medication Administration Release form. The staff will keep all medicines in a locked cabinet in

the preschool kitchen. We are unable to administer over-the-counter (OTC) medication such as Tylenol or cough medicine unless it is prescribed by a doctor. Please note that sunscreen is considered an OTC medication and therefore cannot be applied by the preschool staff.

Sex Offender Policy for San Marcos Lutheran Church: San Marcos Lutheran Church has a policy regarding the attendance of sex offenders at church events and worship services. If you wish to review the policy it is on file in the church office.

Sick policy: We want your child to have the best day possible in school - if he or she exhibits any of the following symptoms, please call us and then keep your child at home that day:

- Fever of 99' or higher for 4 hours or more
- Complaints of aches or sore throat
- Persistent cough
- Fatigue
- Rash that may be contagious
- Conjunctivitis ("pink eye")
- Diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Diagnosed communicable virus or illness
- Extreme nasal discharge
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours

Please note that your child must be symptom-free or be receiving antibiotics (depending on the nature of the illness) for at least 24 hours before returning to school. We really appreciate your consideration in keeping other children healthy when your child is not feeling well! It is our policy to inform parents whenever an infectious or contagious medical condition occurs among one of our enrolled students. For reasons of privacy and confidentiality we cannot name specific individuals.

Sunscreen: We are usually outside for at least an hour each day. Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen as needed to their children either before or upon arrival. Please do not leave sunscreen in your child's cubby as it is considered an "over the counter" medication and cannot be left in the reach of small children.

Toileting: Enrolled children must be in underwear and able to independently use the toilet. We can supervise the children in cleaning themselves and changing clothes as needed, but we will encourage them to help themselves as much as possible. We

allow for some flexibility when children have been recently toilet-trained; however, we are not equipped as a diaper-changing facility. If your child has repeated toilet accidents while at school he or she may need to exit our program until they are more successful with toileting.

Parent and Family Relations

Birthdays: With more than 65 children we have several birthdays each month! We will celebrate once a month at snack time (usually on the last Thursday or Friday) for all of the children who have birthdays during that month. There will be a sign-up on the Bulletin Board (outside the Directors office) to bring cookies for the celebration during your child's birthday month. The preschool will provide fruit as a complement to the cookies. Parents are welcome to join us! If your child is having a birthday party we ask that you do not hand out invitations at school; please refer to the Parent Directory for friends' addresses and phone numbers.

Bringing Items From Home: Please leave toys, blankies and other personal items at home unless requested and/or approved by your child's classroom teacher. Each teacher will have designated "share" days throughout the school year where children can bring in something special. Note you will be asked to take items home that have not been approved to be at school for that day.

Checking Folders and Cubbies: Please check your child's folder and cubby "**daily**" for artwork, newsletters, and other important information. We recognize that parents are not able to save every scrap of paper, flower or drawing their child creates at preschool, but to avoid tears and disappointment, we ask that you not throw these items away in the presence of your child at school and make those decisions in your own home. Your child may be sharing a cubby with a child in the other session so please help keep the cubbies clean and neat.

Church Services: We recognize that many of our preschool families already have church homes; however, all are welcome and invited to attend the Sunday worship services at San Marcos Lutheran Church at 8:30, 9:45 (informal) or 11:00. Sunday School is offered at 9:45. Special services are also held at Christmas and Easter. In addition, the church holds several family events throughout the year including barbecues, potlucks, and Vacation Bible School. All families are invited to these events and we will keep you apprised throughout the year.

Communication: The teachers will keep you informed of your child's progress and classroom activities on an ongoing basis. You will be greeted every morning by the staff and have the opportunity to chat briefly with teachers at the end of the day. A quick walk around the Discovery Room, Outdoor Environment and classrooms will give you a good idea of current activities. Check the bulletin boards outside the classroom and Director's office for more information about weekly plans and please feel free to talk to the teachers about your child's day. If you desire a longer period of time to meet with the teacher please make an appointment so that we can arrange for other staff members to supervise the group of children. The best times to meet with the teachers are before 8:30 or after 12:00.

Confidentiality and Privacy: We respect the privacy and confidentiality of our children and families. Please understand that we cannot share information about other children's learning, behavior or family matters unless that family has given permission to share such information.

- Contact Information: We do not release information such as phone numbers or class lists. Please refer to the Parent Directory if you need to contact another parent.

- Internet Privacy: Please respect the privacy of our children and families when posting photos and other information on social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc, by not providing names or other identifying information regarding our students. Please do not use the names San Marcos Lutheran Church or San Marcos Lutheran Church Children's Center when setting up an account unless you are authorized to do so by an officer of the church or preschool. The preschool has their own Facebook page at **SMLC Children's Center** where you will be able to view photos of activities posted by the Director. We appreciate your cooperation and understanding in this regard!

Easing Separation: Saying goodbye to your child on the first day of preschool can be difficult for both parents and children. We believe that a short, quick drop-off helps your child more than a prolonged goodbye. You are welcome to call during the day to see how your child is doing but we find that most children adjust quickly to the preschool environment. Please ask the teacher or Director if you need more information on separation.

How Parents Can Help: To help ensure that your child has a good day in school, parents can do the following: Make sure that your child gets to bed at a reasonable time and that he or she has a good night's sleep. Have your child eat a nutritious breakfast before coming to school. Allow your child to wear clothes that are easy

to take off and put on (for bathroom use) and that can get dirty. Help your children learn to be self-sufficient by having them walk (rather than being carried) and carry their own belongings to and from the school building! If your child is not feeling well, please call us so that we can decide whether your child should stay home that day. Please note, just as older children and adults have bad days or anxiety, it is very normal for children who typically enjoy school to have times when they don't want to come. The important thing is for parents to remain positive about attending school. The more proactive you are that attending preschool is important and fun, the easier it will be for your child to work through their difficulties and this will set your child up for success in elementary and beyond where attendance is mandatory. Feel free to chat with your child's teacher and/or the Director if you have questions and concerns.

Parent Conferences: The teachers observe and document your child's growth and development throughout the year. In October we hold a one hour Back to School Event where you can get enjoy some time with your child in their classroom and review the curriculum for the year. In the Spring, we have Parent Conferences during which the teachers will share information with you about your child's growth and development. It's important to note that this will not be a time of "surprises!" It is the policy of our preschool to keep parents updated on their child's growth and development on a daily basis as an open dialogue between home and school is critical in ensuring we are able to effectively meet the needs of your child and provide the resources and assistance you might need. Please note that school will not be in session during our 2-day conference time in the Spring. If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, please do not hesitate to speak with the teacher at any time.

Parent Volunteers: The preschool provides exciting opportunities for parents and extended family to volunteer during in the Fall during our Trunk or Treat Event and our Christmas Program; in the Winter during our Trike a Thon and in the Spring during our Easter Egg Hunt; and during our end of the year Aloha Celebration and Party. There is also an opportunity for parents and extended family to share their time and talents with the children through our Career Explorers program. Information regarding this will be provided by the Director and/or teaching staff throughout the year. There will also be opportunities throughout the year for families to donate various items such as bird seed, art supplies, paper, dress up materials, outdoor toys etc... The Director will post information as to what is needed on a routine basis via e-mail and the parent newsletter.

Parking: For everyone's safety, please limit your speed and park within the established spaces. Besides preschool families, we have a number of parishioners and other visitors at the church every day who need and use the disabled parking spaces. Please do not leave younger siblings in the car alone while you drop off or pick up your child...it is against the law! Car seats are required in California for all children ages 8 and under and 4.9" in height and under. We are mandated reporters, so we will be speaking with you if we see you are in violation of the law.

Pastoral Care: Should you be in need of pastoral care or assistance, we invite you to visit the church office or call the church at 760-727-1509.

Reporting Changes of Information: Please inform us in writing as soon as possible when you have a change of address, phone number, or any emergency or medical information. In case of an accident or emergency we need to be able to get in touch with you quickly.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse: We care for the safety and well-being of all of the children and their families. All staff members at SMLCCC are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. That means that we are legally obligated to notify Child Protective Services if we suspect any type of verbal, physical or sexual abuse.

Younger Siblings: We understand that the preschool environment is often an inviting place for all children in your family! We have many colorful and exciting activities located within a young child's reach. Unfortunately our preschool is not set up for the infant or toddler age - we have many materials that present choking hazards for younger children or that can be dangerous in the hands of a smaller child. Also, children who are not officially enrolled in our preschool program cannot legally be left in the care of our staff without the parent's presence. For these reasons, younger siblings must stay *within an arm's length* of their parent at all times when they are in the preschool (including inside and on the playground). Thank you for helping us ensure the safety of all children!

Clothing

Appropriate Dress: Children should wear play clothes that are comfortable, easy for them to take off and put on in the bathroom, and that can get dirty or stained. Please save the dressy outfits for special occasions. We do allow the children to go barefoot and to wear sandals to preschool, but they must have closed toe shoes for riding our trikes. We have a small supply of crocs available for the children should they not have closed toe shoes. Shoes such as cowboy boots or those with slippery soles are not conducive to active play outside and should not be worn. Please have your child dress according to the weather - we play outside every day (unless there are strong winds or heavy rains) and we want your child to be comfortable.

Change of Clothes: Please bring a change of clothes, including shirt, pants or shorts, socks and underwear, to leave at school for your child. Put them in a gallon-size Ziploc-type bag and label the bag with your child's name. The clothes will be kept in cubbies in the bathroom. If your child needs to change clothes during the day and dirty clothes are sent home, please send a replacement change of clothes the next time you come to school.

Label Sweaters and Jackets: Please make sure to label any clothes that your child may take off during the day, such as sweaters, jackets or hats. We are surprised every year at the number of unlabeled clothes that are left at school. We donate unclaimed clothes to charity at the end of each school year.

Meals

Morning Snack: We serve a nutritious snack to the children every morning about midway through our day. We keep a monthly menu of snacks posted near the kitchen. We see snack and meal times as learning experiences. The children learn to serve themselves, including pouring their drink from a pitcher. They learn to clean up after themselves if they spill and when they're finished eating. We teach and encourage good table manners. Also, the children are practicing concepts such as math and problem-solving when they help pass out napkins and cups or when they spread their own peanut butter.

Lunch: Parents need to provide a lunch if their child is staying after 12:00. We encourage healthy eating at meal times. Lunches should contain a protein such as sandwich, yogurt, cheese or meat; fruit or vegetable; and a nutritious drink. An occasional treat such as jello or a cookie is okay as well. Three or four small

servings of food, including a drink, are sufficient. Please *do not send* chips, fruit snacks or roll-ups, candy or soda. We will ask the children to leave those foods in their lunch boxes.

Breakfast: We do not serve breakfast and we prefer that all children eat breakfast before coming to school. Once school begins we use the tables for art, puzzles and other activities and there is no place to eat food until snack time.

Admission and Attendance

Absence: We miss you when you're not here! Please call or e-mail the Director to let us know when your child will not be attending school. We consider you family and want to know when your child is ill or have something special planned where they will miss school.

Arrival and Departure Times: Children may arrive starting at 8:00 am. Children who arrive after 8:45 (or when the first Circle Time starts in the classroom) will need to wait in the Discovery Room with a staff member until the Circle Time has ended so as not to disrupt the classroom activity. Please pick your child up no later than 12:10 if he or she is not staying for lunch. Children remaining after 12:10 will sit with the children eating lunch and parents will be charged for Extended Care time. We close at 1:00 PM; parents need to arrive and sign their child out no later than 1:00 to avoid a late pick-up fee (\$11.25 for each fifteen minutes; fee doubles after three late arrivals within one school year). Please plan on leaving the preschool with your child no later than 1PM sharp so that the staff can clean up and prepare for the next day.

Payments for Tuition and Extended Care: We use Vanco Service's Simply Giving program for Tuition and Extended Care payments. Monthly tuition is paid through electronic funds transfer (EFT) on the 10th of each month from August through May (10 months). An invoice for extended care hours used will be given to parents at the end of each month. Extended care fees are paid via EFT on the 15th of the following month. There is a \$25 fee for any Non-Sufficient Funds. We do not give refunds or credit for days when your child is absent due to illness, family vacation or personal reasons. Our holiday break periods are already figured into your monthly rate and you are not charged for these. Please speak with the director if you have any questions about the payment method.

Required Forms for Admission: Before beginning school we must have the following forms on file: Registration and Tuition Agreement; Emergency Information; Parent Rights; Personal Rights; copy of current and complete Immunization Record (Mandatory Waiver form if abstaining from any required vaccinations); and Health, Developmental and Social History. The last page of the Parent Handbook needs to be signed by a parent and returned within the first week of school. The Physician's Health Clearance form must be filled out and returned within one month of the start of school.

School and Extended Care Hours: School hours are 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Our two-day session is Tuesdays and Thursdays; our three-day session is Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and our 5 day session is Monday-Friday. Extended Care Lunch Bunch is offered at an hourly rate from 12:00 - 1:00. Please refer to our Tuition Rate sheet for current prices. Please note that on the last Wednesday of every month we will close at 12:00 in order to hold a staff meeting. There will be no lunch or afternoon Extended Care on those days.

Sign-In and Sign-Out: We are required by law to have parents sign their children in and out with their **full names** every day of attendance. Only those people listed on the Emergency Contact form can pick up your child; anyone other than the child's parent must be over 18 years of age and must be prepared to show identification before being allowed to pick up the child. Parents must give *written* permission for someone else to pick up their child.

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