



Parent Handbook 2019-2020

Trinity United Methodist Church
4000 NW 53rd Avenue
Gainesville, FL. 32653
352-416-3025

Big Hearted | Spirit Led | Christ Minded | Bound by Love



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**Our facility is open from 7:30am
until 5:30pm five days a week.**

Early Morning hours are 7:30am-9am

School hours are 9am-12pm

Lunch and Afternoon Enrichment hours are 12pm-5:30pm

Stepping Stones School Calendar 2019-2020

AUGUST	Mon. Aug. 5th—Thurs. Aug. 8th	Pre-planning (Meet the Teacher Aug. 8th)
	Mon. Aug. 12th	First Day of School
SEPTEMBER	Mon. Sept. 2nd	NO SCHOOL—Labor Day
	Mon. Sept. 23th — Fri. Oct. 11th	School Popcorn Fundraiser
OCTOBER	Fri. Oct. 4th	NO SCHOOL—UF Homecoming
	Fri. Oct. 18th	NO SCHOOL—Teacher Workday
	Thurs. Oct. 24th & Fri. Oct. 25th	Individual Picture Days
NOVEMBER	Mon. Nov. 11th	NO SCHOOL—Veteran’s Day/FLEX Day #1
	Mon. Nov. 25th—Fri. Nov. 29th	NO SCHOOL—Thanksgiving Holiday
DECEMBER	Wed. Dec. 4th	Children & Family Ministries Advent Festival
	Thurs. Dec. 19th	Christmas Program 6:30pm
	Mon. Dec. 23rd—Fri. Jan. 3rd	NO SCHOOL—Christmas /Winter Break
JANUARY	Mon. Jan. 6th	NO SCHOOL—Teacher Workday/ FLEX Day #2
	Tues. Jan. 7th	School Resumes
	Fri. Jan. 17th	NO SCHOOL—Teacher Workday (Parent /Teacher Conferences)
	Mon. Jan. 20th	NO SCHOOL—MLK Day
	Wed. Jan. 29th— Fri. Jan. 31st	Enrollment for current families & alumni
FEBRUARY	Thurs. Feb. 13th & Fri. Feb. 14th	Enrollment for community
	Mon. Feb. 17th	NO SCHOOL—President’s Day
MARCH	Thurs. March 19th	Spring Event
	Fri. March 20th	NO SCHOOL—Teacher Workday
	March 23rd—March 27th	Spring Break
APRIL	Thurs. Apr. 2nd & Fri. Apr. 3rd	Class Picture Days
	Mon. Apr. 27th— Fri. May 1st	Teacher Appreciation Week
MAY	Mon. May 25th	NO SCHOOL – Memorial Day
	Fri. May 15th	Pre-K Field Day
	Wed. May 20th	Three’s Family Picnic
	Fri. May 29th	Pre-K Graduation/Last Day of School
JUNE	Mon. Jun. 1st—Tues. June 2nd	Post Planning

Our Vision

A Place to Belong—

We believe each person is a child of God, and therefore worthy of love, acceptance, and encouragement. We seek to provide a place where the nurturing of children is of the highest calling.

A Place to Become—

We believe we are made in the image of God and given the capacity to create. We seek to provide to all children opportunities for their cognitive, social, emotional, physical, creative, and spiritual growth.

A Place to Make a Difference—

We believe that God's love is given freely to all of us. We seek to build a staff that is valued for their commitment to children, and a community where parents of all cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds are embraced for their uniqueness in our world.

Mission Statement

“Caring for God’s children each step as they grow.”



And Jesus said, “Let the little children come unto me.” Matthew 19:14

Program Overview

We provide a curriculum that encourages whole-child learning, self-esteem, positive self concept and social skills. Each classroom has an age appropriate environment where the children learn from each other, as well as their teacher.

Research shows that children learn best through play which reflects real actions, tangible objects and direct encounters involving all five senses. Therefore, much of our program is child centered, permitting each child the freedom to act upon their own curiosity and ideas within a consistent framework. Activities are carefully selected to develop the cognitive, physical, creative, spiritual, and social domains.

Children are provided a variety of educational opportunities including learning centers to explore and planned activities in art, religion, creative movement, cooking, gardening, nature and much more! Reading, phonics, math, history, science and geography skills are developed within the daily curriculum.

Our foundation is based on a constant supply of love and nurturing, a focus on Christ, and the fostering of a close family feeling in a carefully appointed classroom. Our student/teacher ratios are low affording each child individual attention as needed. Enrollment is limited to help achieve these goals. Every classroom has a teacher and an assistant.

In addition to our other curricula, we use Get Set for School Readiness and Writing, which you will hear us refer more specifically to as Handwriting Without Tears. Young children are not ready to sit still and focus for long periods of time. They learn best when they move, manipulate objects, build, sing, draw, and participate in dramatic play. The Readiness and Writing program acknowledges that learning needs to be joyful, child-friendly, and active. We will be building skills in delightful ways, but also carefully, deliberately, and one step at a time.

Chapel Time and Christian Education

As a ministry of the church, the school's primary objective is to help children become aware of God's love. Chapel is held weekly for the three and four-year-old children. Two-year-old children will join the school for chapel in January. Our Toddler class (ages 15-23 months) children do not attend chapel but will be taught our Bible stories and songs in their classroom. Our curriculum offers a Christ based lesson every week. Each lesson provides a framework for children to explore, express, create, and relate to one another each day.

Music

Many studies have shown the connection between music education and instruction and academic learning and achievements. Through music, children develop self-esteem, self-discipline, and individual creativity. Music time begins with a selection of familiar songs and movement games. New songs are introduced frequently. Some follow classroom themes to enhance the learning experience. Each class will meet bi-

weekly. The music class will reinforce skills learned in the classroom such as listening skills, cooperation and sharing. The children will be learning all the above skills, but most importantly, having fun!

Happy Feet (Movement Program)

Organized movement helps children build motor skills, learn about physical fitness, and lays the groundwork for an active, healthy lifestyle. Each class will begin with a loco motor/space awareness activity (walking through cones), then move to a manipulative activity (throwing, rolling, kicking), a non-loco motor activity (bending, stretching) and conclude with a rhythmic activity (ribbon sticks, dancing). New activities will be introduced bi-weekly and all activities will be repeated frequently during the year so that success is achieved by every student. We will be moving and having a great time while developing our bodies as well as our minds!

Enrollment

1. We begin enrolling children who have reached the age of fifteen months by September 1st for the year of enrollment. Enrollment is based upon age level ratios, which are kept low to ensure happy and safe learning environments.
2. Children are enrolled on a first come, first served basis until the program capacity is met. Returning students, siblings, and alumni siblings are enrolled subsequently.
3. A waiting list for perspective students is established once classroom capacity is met. To be placed on the waiting list, please call the preschool office at 352-416-3025. A new waiting list is established each year.
4. All required enrollment documents along with a **non-refundable** registration fee are required upon acceptance into Stepping Stones Preschool.
6. Parents will receive a confirmation of enrollment.
7. Parents have a 30-day grace period from the time of enrollment to change their school program times. After that date, a \$25 fee will be assessed.

Fees and Tuition

Stepping Stones yearly tuition is divided into ten monthly payments; holidays have already been considered. There are no reductions of tuition based on absence or holiday closings. Stepping Stones tuition is calculated to affordably accommodate our families while also providing a safe, caring, exceptional early childhood education with a compassionate and outstanding staff.

1. Tuition payments are due by the 1st of the month. A late fee of \$20 will be charged if payment has not been received on or by the 10th of every month.
2. There are three options for making monthly tuition payments: automatic withdrawal, online debt or credit card, OR year-in-full (if received by Aug. 1st). Each family will choose which payment option they prefer, prior to the school year beginning, and will receive applicable information.
3. Accounts that are past due for 30 days or more may result in withdrawal of your child from the program. Parents must contact the Director, McCall Griggs, to arrange payment before their child may be readmitted to the program.
4. The non-refundable registration fee is paid at the time of registration. The first tuition payment of the new school year is due on August 1st.
5. Parents have a 30-day grace period from the time of enrollment to change their school program times. Afterwards, a \$25 fee will be assessed for changes. To change your program selection, please contact the preschool office at 416-3025.
6. A late fee of \$20 will be charged for any child picked up after their scheduled pick-up time of 12pm, 1pm, 3pm, or 5:30pm. Frequent "late pick-ups" will result in your child being unable to use the afternoon enrichment. Please be respectful of our staff and your chosen pick-up time.
7. There is an occasional drop-off option based on ratio availability. Arrangements must be made in advance with the preschool office. There is a \$10 per hour fee for this convenience.
8. If you have any tuition or financing questions please contact the Assistant Director, Anne Dale, at 416-3049 or adale@trinitygnv.org.

Tuition:

Program time	2 days	3 days	5 days		Program Time	2 days	3 days	5 days
7:30am-12pm	\$275	\$360	\$540		9am-12pm	\$200	\$275	\$390
7:30am-1pm	\$320	\$420	\$610		9am-1pm	\$250	\$340	\$490
7:30am-3pm	\$390	\$540	\$775		9am-3pm	\$340	\$450	\$650
7:30am-5:30pm	\$490	\$650	\$900		9am-5:30pm	\$430	\$575	\$825

Early Morning and Afternoon Enrichment

If you utilize Early Morning Care (7:30am-8:50am) please bring your child to room 112, 114, 116, OR 125 (your child's name will be posted outside of the classroom). Teachers will escort the students to their classroom at 8:50am.

Children need to be in attendance for the school day (9a-12p) to participate in afternoon enrichment. **If you need to reach someone after 1pm please contact the Director, McCall Griggs at (352) 416-3073 OR the Assistant Director, Anne Dale at (352) 416-3049.**

Children in our Toddlers & Twos afternoon enrichment classes are encouraged to bring a school tote each day with their name clearly marked on the outside. This school tote is for lunches, clothing, diapers, or any item that will make the transition easier. Your child's projects will be placed in the tote at the end of the school day. School totes are taken home daily to be replenished and linens are sent home on Fridays to be washed and returned the following week.

Occasional Drop Off- For the convenience of our parents we are offering an occasional drop off when no other childcare options are available. This is a pre-pay program based on availability for \$10 an hour. Children must be in attendance during school hours (9a-12p) to participate in Occasional Afternoon Enrichment. A 24-hour notice is requested.

Health

Our staff will continually encourage good personal health and hygiene habits for your child while in attendance at school. We will require hand washing before snacks and lunch, after toileting and at other appropriate times. Instruction in personal hygiene will be emphasized as part of our curriculum.

1. Should your child exhibit signs or symptoms of illness while at school, he/she will be isolated and **you or your designee will be called to pick up your child immediately.**
2. In case of a communicable disease exposure at school, a notice will be posted, and parents will be encouraged to consult their child's physician. Children absent due to a contagious disease may not return to school until their physician provides a signed statement that they are no longer contagious and may resume activities.
3. All medication administration policies and procedures are state regulated. Any prescription medication administered by our staff must be in the original container. A Medication Administration Authorization Form must be completed each time your child is to receive medication at school. Please come to the school office to fill out this form and drop off the medication.

4. Health Forms: All students must have on file a current immunization record (form 680) and a well child physical (form 3040) within 10 days of entering school. These medical records must be updated annually, or as needed, to remain in compliance with state law. Your child cannot attend school if he/she is out of compliance with the Department of Children and Family Services' rules and regulations.

5. Allergies are common in young children. Whether environmental or food induced, please provide enough information on your child's enrollment form so we may take appropriate precautions to protect your child's health.

Guidelines for Childhood Illnesses

Keep your child home from school when exhibiting signs of:

- Fever within the last 24 hours
- A cold or cloudy nasal discharge
- A constant cough or croup
- Any communicable disease (see chart for Guidelines for Communicable Diseases; must have a doctor's note to return to school.)
- Lice or nits
- Scabies
- Impetigo
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Rapid or difficult breathing
- Conjunctivitis
- Infected sores

Most common reasons for sending a child home from school are:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Fever of 100 or above
- Symptoms of communicable disease
- Impetigo
- Herpes
- Head lice or nits
- Croup (barking cough)
- Stiff neck

Your child may return to school when:

- Free from fever for 24 hours
- Nasal discharge has subsided
- Vomiting or diarrhea has been resolved for **24 hours**
- Cough or croup has subsided
- Incubation period of communicable disease has transpired, and your child is no longer contagious (must have a Dr.'s note to return to school)
- No lice or nits are visible in hair or scalp
- No open sores are visible

School Policies

Positive Behavior Modification: The core of our approach to guidance is to foster a nurturing and trusting atmosphere enabling the children to try new things without the fear of failure. Boundaries (with logical consequences) will be set within this atmosphere so that children learn to work and play cooperatively and take pride in their accomplishments.

Teachers use the following method of guidance with the children:

1. The teacher redirects the child's attention to an acceptable activity.
2. The teacher talks to the child regarding his/her behavior, so they understand why it is unacceptable.
3. The teacher shows and explains the desired behavior.
4. The teacher administers supervised time-out in the classroom no longer than 1 minute per year old. A child will never be away from the care of a teacher or staff member.
5. In the event of continual disruptive behavior such as biting, excessive hitting, pinching, etc., the following steps will be taken:
 - a. Each incident will be documented in the child's records, noting the date, circumstances leading up to the incident and guidance actions taken. We ask parents to sign the incident report immediately indicating they were notified of the incident.
 - b. If there is a second incident, a conference will be held with a parent or guardian of the child committing the incident. This conference will be with the director and the child's teacher.
 - c. If the inappropriate or disruptive behavior continues, the parent will be contacted and required to pick the child up from school.
 - d. After all the above steps have been exhausted, the child may be asked to leave the school. Our goal is to help children learn to behave within acceptable limits, as well as maintain a safe and secure environment for all the children in our program.

Non-Voluntary Dismissal: In rare cases, there may arise a situation in which the preschool, after due time and concentrated effort, may be forced to ask for the dismissal or withdrawal of a child. There may be certain children who are unable to interact in a preschool situation and may be a threat to the staff, other children, and possibly themselves. Often, they need a specialized small group for interaction, and sometimes they need professional counseling. The preschool pledges to work to the best of its ability but reserves the right of dismissal without recourse.

Child Placement: As a ministry of Trinity United Methodist Church, it is our mission to provide children with a positive and loving learning experience with an emphasis on Christian teachings. Child placement is decided by:

- Age of the child
- Availability of class openings
- Student/teacher ratios as mandated by the Department of Children and Families
- Health of the child
- Independence in toileting (three and four-year-old classes)

- Emotional, social, and intellectual development of the child
- The needs and personalities of the individual child, with input from the teacher and parent at the Parent/Teacher Conference and/or with input from the director and assistant director.
- The need to create group dynamics that are beneficial to spiritual, social, emotional, and cognitive learning for **all** children.

The Stepping Stones staff and administration will be responsible for the placement of each child into the proper classes to benefit each group of children.

Arrival and Dismissal:

- Children enrolled are expected to attend school at 9:00 a.m. We strongly discourage drop-offs after 9:00 am due to the disruption it causes to the other students and planned activities.
- Please be prompt. It is very difficult for your child to transition into the class once activities have started.
- If your child is more than 30 minutes late, without a doctor’s appointment and/or notification, your child will be considered absent for that day.
- For the safety of your child, please call or email your child’s teacher if your child will be absent. If we do not receive notification of absence, we are required by DCF to contact you or your emergency contacts to verify the safety of your child.

If you need to speak with a teacher, please arrange to do so after class. No child will be released to anyone other than a parent or authorized substitute indicated on your child’s enrollment form. Please let us know of any changes. If you are late picking up your child from school, you will be charged a \$20 late fee.

- Please be prepared to show a photo ID when picking up children. (babysitters, aunts, grandparents, etc.)
- Afternoon Enrichment is intended to be a supplemental enrichment program for the students who have attended a full day (9am-12pm) of school. Children who have not attended a full day of school will not be permitted to use the afternoon enrichment that day.
- For the safety of your children we ask that you please sign your child in when you bring them to school and sign them out when you pick them up. **This is a Department of Children and Families requirement.**
- Even if only temporarily, authorized adults MUST sign children out when leaving the classroom. (therapists, grandparents, parents, etc.)

Diapers and Toilet Training: Toilet trained means the child can verbally tell the teacher they need to use the toilet. Children can pull clothes up and down independently.

Children in our three and four-year-old classes must be completely toilet trained. We do not have diaper changing stations in these rooms as required by the Department of Children and Families. If your 3 or 4-year-old is not completely toilet trained at the beginning of the school year, the following steps will apply:

Step 1: We understand children have accidents, however after 3 accidents while at school,

you will be asked to keep your child at home for concentrated toilet training. To secure your child's place in our school, tuition must be kept up to date.

Step 2: Conference with the director and teacher.

For our younger students, ages 1 and 2, because of sanitary reasons, we ask the following:

1. Please send **disposable diapers**
2. If you are in the process of toilet training, your child must wear pull ups (that open and close on the sides) until they are completely toilet trained.
3. If you begin toilet training during the year, please ask your teacher for our Toilet Training Procedures.
4. If your child is toilet trained or in the process of toilet training, please dress them in clothes that are easy for them to pull up and down.
5. If your child is two and in underwear and has frequent accidents at school, we ask they wear pull-ups or diapers during the school day; until they can go through a school day without an accident.

Sharing Time: Teachers will allow "Show and Tell" items on specified days. Please do not bring toys from home, except on your specified sharing day, as we cannot replace any items that may be lost or broken. Do not bring guns, ropes, knives, war toys, or other toys of destruction.

Clothing and Personal Items:

1. Please dress your child in comfortable and washable clothes. Clothing with complicated fasteners and one-piece outfits should be avoided. Clothing should be compatible with food stains, paint, sand, water, mud and grass stains.
2. Children must wear shoes always. Tennis shoes, sneakers or rubber- soled, fully enclosed shoes are recommended.
3. Please label all clothing, including hats, sweaters, jackets or other items that might be removed and placed in cubbies during the day. Blankets, towels or sheets used by children in Afternoon Enrichment for naps should also be clearly labeled.
4. Please provide a complete change of clothing for your child in a labeled zip-lock bag. If your child attends Afternoon Enrichment, we will need another change of clothes in a labeled zip lock bag. Any children who wear diapers or pull-ups should bring a clearly labeled package at the beginning of the year and replenish the supply as necessary.
5. Unless it is necessary to assist your child's transition at the beginning of the year, we discourage bringing toys or other personal items to school because of the potential for loss or breakage. Occasionally, the teachers may request items from home. Please label these items clearly and take them home at the end of the day.

6. School totes are requested for the children. We ask that lunches, diapers and nap items be placed in their tote. As stated in the Afternoon Enrichment section, we will place all your child's artwork from the school day in the tote at the end of the day. Please make sure that the tote stays replenished with essentials for your child.

7. LABEL EVERY PERSONAL ITEM- Please make sure EVERYTHING is labeled with a first and last name. Some of these items include water bottles, lunch boxes, jackets, blankets, pacifiers, and backpacks or tote bags.

Birthdays: Birthdays are special, and we enjoy helping your child celebrate. If you wish to provide a special snack, please contact the teacher in advance. Please do not bring written invitations to your child's party unless the entire class is invited.

Developmental Reports: Children in the 3 and 4 yr. old classes will be evaluated between semesters. Each child is unique and develops at his/her own pace. These evaluations are primarily to provide information on your child's development.

Parent/Teacher Conferences: Conferences will be scheduled in January, at which time teachers will advise you of your child's progress in school. Additional conferences may be scheduled by appointment when children will not be present.

Insurance: We would like to point out that our insurance does not cover non-enrolled children visiting our school. Unfortunately, we must deny any request to have a friend or relative attend class with your child.

Parties: Teachers will plan occasional class parties (usually corresponding to holidays). Parents and other family members are always welcome to attend any school activities. Some of the special occasions celebrated are: Fall Festival Costume Parade, Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas programs, End of the Year Celebration, Teacher Appreciation, Mother's Day, and Graduation for Pre-K classes.

Snack: Parents sign up monthly to take a turn bringing a snack to share with the class. We have listed snack suggestions below. If your child has numerous food allergies, please bring your child their own snack from home.

Volunteers: We welcome parent participation. Mothers and fathers are wonderful personal resources. Any parent or adult who volunteers in the classroom will be required to complete a Volunteer Acknowledgement as required by the Dept. of Children and Family Services. This form is included in your Open House packet. Volunteers must check in with the school office and receive a visitor badge.

Governance: Stepping Stones is a ministry of Trinity United Methodist Church and is accountable and responsible to its organization and policies.

Safety & Emergency Procedures:

The safety of our children is our number one concern at Stepping Stones Preschool. The following safety measures are a part of our daily/monthly schedules:

Sign-In and Out – only those authorized on the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) enrollment form can remove children unless written notice is given ahead of time. A picture ID will be required if person is not known to staff.

Locked Doors – all exit doors, except for the double doors at the main entrance to the education building, will always remain locked.

Parking – please adhere to the following rules:

1. Park only in designated parking areas. Always hold your child's hand in the parking lot and driveway areas of the church grounds.
2. Use the walkway provided for entering and exiting the building.
3. Do not double-park for any reason.
4. If you are having lunch or visiting at the picnic tables or playground areas, please always supervise your children.
5. Do not park in the covered driveway or along the curb for any reason. This is a fire zone and must always be easily accessed by emergency vehicles .
6. Please make sure you have your child's hand when exiting the building and do not let them run out on their own. The safety of your child is our top priority and teaching them roadway safety is vitally important.

Emergency Procedures – In the event your child is injured, emergency procedures are posted in each classroom. Teachers have walkie-talkies in the classroom and with them on the playground. There are First Aid kits located between each set of classrooms. An accident report will be filled out for you to sign in case your child is injured, in compliance with the Department of Children and Families.

Fire Safety – Each month fire drills are conducted to make sure children know what to do in the event of a fire. Primary and secondary routes of evacuation are posted in classrooms. Smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, and an intercom system are available if needed.

Evacuation Procedures – In case of an emergency, requiring an evacuation, Stepping Stones' children will be relocated to an announced location; where they will remain with their teachers until picked up by their parents.

Hazardous Weather Watch/Warning – Children will be instructed in the proper procedures in the event of a weather watch warning. A weather radio is in service always to notify us of weather warnings. Hazardous weather drills are conducted periodically throughout the year.

Lock-Down – In a situation, in which a lock-down is warranted, the intercom will announce to all staff to follow specific procedures. Stepping Stones has security cameras positioned in the hallway and parking lot. Lockdown drills are conducted periodically throughout the year.

Hurricanes – Stepping Stones Preschool will follow the Alachua County School Board decisions regarding school closings. However, school days missed, due to hurricanes, will NOT be made up during the school year.

How to Reach Us in The Event Of An Emergency – call the Stepping Stones office at (352) 416-3025. If there is no answer, call the Trinity United Methodist Church office number at (352) 376-6615 and ask them to deliver a message to us. Please use the Trinity number only when necessary.

State License

Stepping Stones Preschool has been granted License # CD8AL0519 by the Department of Children and Families. This certifies that we have met all applicable requirements of the state for our program. We are inspected periodically by the regulatory agencies of both Alachua County and the State to ensure the best for your child in the areas of health, safety, and environmental standards.