



Parent Handbook

2015-2016

Accredited by the National Accreditation Commission for Early
Care and Education Programs



OPEN ARMS CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL
River Road United Methodist Church
8800 River Road
Richmond, Virginia 23229
www.openarmschristianpreschool.org
804-754-0227

Dear Parents,

The Preschool Board of Directors and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your child to the Open Arms Christian Preschool program at River Road United Methodist Church.

We take great pride in being an accredited preschool by NAC (National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs). You can read the standards for accreditation by visiting our school website and clicking on the NAC link on our home page.

We hope that your child's learning experiences in our program will be happy and meaningful. We look forward to sharing in the life of your child for a few hours each week, and we will do our best in caring for your child in all possible ways.

This handbook has been prepared in order that you may know our policies and better understand our program. We will count on close cooperation between parents and staff to assure a positive, successful experience for your child. Please read this handbook carefully and follow the guidelines and suggestions to help us have the best program for your child.

If there are any aspects of our program that you would like to discuss, please feel free to call me anytime. We welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions.

Joan Brennan
Preschool Director
754-0227 (office)
openarms@riverroadumc.org

All policies of this program come under the direction of the Preschool Board of Directors of the River Road United Methodist Church, Richmond, Virginia, and may be revised at any time by the Board.

In compliance with the Code of Virginia, the Preschool is classified as an "Exempt" child day center, meets the qualifications for such classification, and therefore is exempt from licensure. The center voluntarily meets many of the requirements for a state licensed program. Open Arms Christian Preschool is “accredited” by the NAC National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs, a prestigious recognition of a standard of excellence in early childhood education.

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MISSION STATEMENT

River Road United Method Church is called by God in ministry to strengthen the family by providing a quality Christian Preschool to two through five year old children which allows them opportunities to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

GOALS

1. To provide Preschool children with a quality program of learning experiences in a Christian environment.
2. To strengthen the families of preschool children by supporting and assisting the parents in their parenting roles.
3. To minister to the needs of the church family, and to be an outreach of the church into the community.

OBJECTIVES

The program will provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences and interaction between children and teachers which will enable children:

- To grow and develop to their greatest potential physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.
- To grow in the awareness that God made them and loves them.
- To grow in understanding and love for themselves, their families, and others in their world.
- To develop a positive self-concept, self-confidence, and self-respect.
- To develop a positive attitude toward learning.
- To develop social skills in relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults and peers, to gain understanding of the perspectives of other people, and to learn to negotiate and apply rules of group living.

- To develop the ability to think critically, reason, question, experiment, and solve problems.
- To encourage language development: to use language to communicate effectively, to facilitate thinking and learning, to develop listening and speaking skills, and to express ones thoughts and feelings appropriately.
- To enjoy creative expression (in music, art, drama, movement, construction, and dramatic play) and to develop an appreciation for the arts.
- To develop self-control and self-discipline.
- To enhance physical development and skills, both gross motor and fine motor.
- To encourage and demonstrate sound self-care habits involving health, safety, and nutrition.
- To respect cultural diversity.

ADMISSION AND PROGRAMS

Open Arms Christian Preschool is open to anyone desiring a Christian, early education program for their child, subject to the Preschool's ability to provide such education without undue burden or expense, and without adversely affecting the educational experience of other students or the interests and capacities of the Preschool staff. Subject to the above, the Preschool will accept and serve children equally, without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or disability.

AGE: The Preschool will provide classes for two and one half, three, four and five year old children. Children should be two years six months before September 30, 2015 to be admitted into the program.

MORNING PRESCHOOL CLASSES

September through May (9:00 a.m. - noon, unless otherwise noted)

Two-year six month olds and young three-year olds:

Tuesday/Thursday

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

Monday through Friday

These classes will have one teacher, one assistant teacher and twelve children

Older three-year olds and young four-year olds

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

Monday through Friday

These classes will have one teacher, one assistant teacher and fourteen children

Pre-Kindergarten

Monday through Friday

Four-year olds

These classes will have one teacher, one assistant teacher and sixteen children

Junior Kindergarten

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Monday through Friday

Older four-year olds/Young five-year olds

These classes will have one teacher, one assistant teacher and sixteen children

FULL-CARE PROGRAMS

These programs are available to children participating in the morning preschool program:

Early care (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.)

Open to all preschool children

September through May and year-round

Enrichment/Extended Day (noon to 2:00 p.m.)

Open to all preschool children

September through May

See **Enrichment** section for more information about this program

Afternoon Full Care (noon to 6:00 p.m.)

Open to all preschool children

Includes Afternoon Enrichment classes (September through May)

September through May and year-round

CAMP OPEN ARMS

(9:00 a.m. to noon)

Last week of May through last week of August

Open to all preschool children (both Open Arms and other preschools)

Early and afternoon care options available

Camp is included for children who participate in the year-round programs

See **Camp Open Arms** section for more information about this program

APPLICATION

An application form with personal data, medical form, current and up-to-date immunization records, official birth certificate, permission slips, and emergency information **MUST** be completed and signed by a parent before a child can be enrolled. An original, official birth certificate is required to be seen and recorded within the first seven days of initial attendance. The preschool is legally responsible to report failure to submit this form. A \$125.00, non-refundable, registration fee is due at the time of application.

TUITION

Rates for the morning preschool program (September through May) are: \$1,908.00 per year for the two day classes, \$2,493.00 per year for the three day classes, \$3,582.00 for the three hour five day classes and \$5,688.00 for the five hour junior kindergarten classes. Fees for early, extended and afternoon care will be included in your monthly bill. Please contact the director concerning rates for these programs. Tuition payment must be made by one of the following plans:

MONTHLY: A registration fee with equal payments of tuition due by July 1, 2015 and the first of each month through and including March 1, 2016

ANNUALLY: A registration fee with application and total amount for 9 months tuition due by July 1, 2015.

If an alternate method of payment is required, arrangements must be made with the director prior to the beginning of the school year.

*Families enrolled in any of full year programs will also be billed monthly, with the first payment due upon entering the program and the first of each month thereafter. (See **Enrichment/Extended Day** section for further information.)*

Please make tuition checks payable to Open Arms Christian Preschool. Include your child's name on the memo line of the check. Payments will be considered late if not received by the 8th of the month in which they are due and a \$10.00 late charge will be added per

month. Mail or bring your payment to the Preschool. A \$25.00 charge will be made for any returned checks. No refunds will be given for days missed by any student.

Address:

**Open Arms Christian Preschool
River Road United Methodist Church
8800 River Road
Richmond, Virginia 23229**

CURRICULUM

Units of study during the year will include the seasons, weather, holidays, colors, shapes, home and family, helpers, etc. A monthly newsletter will be sent home with pertinent information for parents concerning activities that their child's class will be doing. Teachers will send home daily or weekly sheets to inform you of the daily activities in the classroom. This will enable you to converse with your child more easily about the day's events.

RELIGION

A Christian atmosphere will prevail through the Preschool. Children will learn about God's love through their interaction with their teachers. Bible stories, songs, thoughts, and prayers will be interwoven throughout the curriculum. A fifteen minute chapel time will be held once a week for our three-, four- and five-year olds. There will be no pressure for the child to become Methodist, however, we do welcome you to our church, and will seek to minister to the needs of all of our Preschool families.

YEARLY CALENDAR

The Preschool will follow very closely the same schedule as the Henrico County School system. Some of the holidays and breaks may be slightly different. The school calendars are posted on our website. In the case of inclement weather, we will make the decision to open, delay or close, independent of Henrico. **(see INCLEMENT WEATHER section)**

DAILY SCHEDULE

Your child's day will include a variety of activities and opportunities for learning. This is a sample of a typical day. Each teacher will inform you of your child's classroom schedule. Each class will follow its specific schedule everyday for the child's security. However, the exact times will be flexible in order to meet the needs of the children.

- 8:50 - 9:00 Carpool Arrival (Parents remain in cars/drop children off with a teacher at building entrance.)
- 9:00 - 9:10 Arrival (Parents bring the children to the classroom door.)
- 9:10 - 10:10 Learning Activities
- 10:10 - 10:25 Clean up - Rest room
- 10:25 - 10:45 Group Time
- 10:45 - 11:00 Snack
- 11:00 - 11:30 Outside Play
- 11:35 - 11:50 Chapel, Music, Movement, Library, or Guidance
- 11:50 - 12:00 Departure

ENRICHMENT/EXTENDED DAY/FULL DAY PROGRAMS

We understand that some families require more hours than the traditional half-day preschool program allows. Open Arms Christian Preschool offers three options for our preschool, extended day and year-round full care programs.

1. Early drop-off from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
2. Extended day (which includes daily enrichment classes) from noon to 2:00 p.m.
3. Afternoon full care (which includes daily enrichment classes) from noon to 6:00 p.m.

Enrichment Classes. Children love exploration – new ideas, new sounds, new tastes. Our afternoon extended day and full care programs provide opportunities to explore new areas that require more time than the morning program allows. All of our enrichment classes are designed to stimulate your child's mind and senses.

The children start their afternoon with a peanut-free lunch, which the children bring. Children may bring milk to drink with their lunches. After lunch, our special enrichment activities include classes such as:

Foreign languages (including sign language)	Story-telling
Cooking	Science Fun
Little Kicks soccer	Yoga
Bible stories and drama	Dance (including tap and folk)
Movement	Creative Expression Art

For children enrolled in the full care program, rest time begins at 12:30 for our younger children. Older children will go down for rest at 1:00. Children who stay for rest are to bring a beach towel and a rest mat (both labeled with your child's name). Children may also bring a small "lovey" to help them rest. (no pacifiers, please). After rest, the children are involved in a enrichment activity, small group instruction or other fun activities, snack and outside time. Our schedule will stay the same throughout the week.

Our afternoon program is truly an extension of our morning preschool program. We hire equally qualified teachers and follow NAC accreditation guidelines, including maintaining accreditation teacher/child ratios.

Some of you may not need to have your child stay every week and want the flexibility of using the program occasionally and as needed. We will still accommodate drop-ins on a space-availability basis, with no less than 24 hours notice. If you find that, as the school year progresses, you would like your child to use the program regularly, please let us know. We will do our best to accommodate you, if space permits.

CAMP OPEN ARMS

A summer camp opportunity is offered weekly, starting the last week of May. This is a fun, educational opportunity for those desiring additional time at preschool before summer starts. Camp themes may include: Bubbles, Jesus is Our Friend, Camping Fun, Cooking, Fourth of July, Nursery Rhymes, Water, Sticky Stuff, Around the World, Story-telling, the Art of Science, Play Ball, Recycling, and Papas.

Camp Open Arms is the summer component for children participating in our full year programs.

Camp runs from 9:00 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday. Early drop-off (7:00 a.m.) and afternoon care (until 6:00 p.m.) is available, at an additional fee. Registration for Camp Open Arms will begin in March for those children in the morning preschool program and for children enrolled in other preschools.

ARRIVAL

Arrival time is between 9:00 and 9:10 a.m. Each child must be accompanied to and from school by an adult who takes the responsibility for checking in the child. The child must be escorted to the classroom each day. Upon arrival, the child will be screened for signs and symptoms of communicable diseases. At this time, we also encourage parents to engage in free communication with the teacher regarding concerns about the child such as extra tiredness or special events at home.

Early arrival drop off at the driveway entrance to preschool building will begin at 8:50 a.m. and last until 9:00 a.m. (Please note that this is not the same as Early Care, which starts at 7:00 a.m.) A teacher will greet your child, do the daily health screening, get any necessary information, and escort your child to a designated room until 9:00 a.m. After 9:00 a.m., please take your child to his/her classroom. Use the entrance to the Preschool building for arrival and departure

DEPARTURE

Notify the school (either in person or by phone) and send a signed note if someone other than the parent or authorized person is to pick up your child. We will need this verbal and written consent in order to release a child to someone who is unfamiliar to the teacher. Departure is scheduled to take place between 11:50 a.m. and 12:00 noon. We appreciate you picking up your child promptly. It is necessary that children be brought and picked up during the specified times. If the above time schedule does not work into your schedule, it may be necessary to take your child out of the program. Parents who are late will be charged \$10 for each quarter hour of tardiness, after the first time. In the event that you are detained because of an emergency, please call the preschool office (754-0227).

At noon, please line up behind the other cars waiting to pick up students beginning at the drive-through entrance to the preschool building. Hold up your car pool number as you get

close to the loading area. Drive up as far as possible to enable more cars to be loaded at one time. Please do not get out of your car. We will escort the children to the waiting cars as they drive up. We will load all children on the right hand side of the car so that they do not have to pass between the cars. You may want to place your child's car seat on that side of the car.

In order to keep the time of waiting in line to a minimum, we may not be able to fasten the children in their car seats. We ask that you have your child sit until you can drive to another area of the parking lot to buckle them in their car seats. Please be sure that your vehicle door is closed after your child is put in the car and you leave the area. Please do not pull around to pass another car that is in line. Be careful to observe all traffic markings on the parking lot and drive through. If you need to come into the building for any reason, please park briefly in a parking space at the side of the building, so that you will not have to cross the traffic with your child. Should you leave your car, always switch your car off and remove the keys. Never leave children unattended in the car.

Please refrain from using cell phones during arrival and departure. This enables us to communicate any important daily updates or schedule changes.

Car pools may be formed at the beginning of the school year. (See **Car Pools** section)

DISMISSAL

Pupils may be dismissed by the Preschool Director subject to the subsequent approval of the Preschool Board of Directors when, in the sole discretion of the Director and the Board, dismissal is in the best interest of the Preschool, its pupils and/or staff, or River Road United Methodist Church. Such reasons may include by way of example, and not limitation, the following: non-cooperation of the pupil or the parent; delinquency of the payment of fees; inability of the child/parent to adjust to Preschool program.

WITHDRAWAL

Children enrolled will be expected to continue in the classes throughout the school year. No refunds of tuition will be given except for the following reasons:

1. If parents are transferred from the city. One month's notice is required.
2. If the child becomes ill and the doctor recommends withdrawal. In this event, a note from the doctor will be requested.

Children withdrawn for acceptable reasons will not be obligated for further payment of tuition providing thirty days notice has been given of such withdrawal. Exceptions will be approved by members of the Board.

SNACK

We will ask you to send in a daily snack for your child. We will provide water for the children to drink. Please refer to the snack guidelines that have been provided to choose an appropriate, nutritious snack: i.e. fruit, vegetable sticks, mixed cereals, pretzels, etc. ***We are a peanut free school!*** We will be teaching good nutrition throughout the year and will need to practice these principles at this time. The snack should be easy for the child to handle without assistance.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are special! Your child will be able to choose a favorite book and songs, along with the classroom helper job that day. To continue our good eating habits, we will still have healthy snacks that day. You may supply special plates and napkins if desired. No favors or gifts please. Children with summer birthdays may arrange a day to celebrate their mid-year birthday or in the spring to celebrate their upcoming birthday. Schedule this day with the teacher. Birthday party invitations will only be distributed to classmates in school if the entire class is invited.

CLOTHING

Children should wear play clothes that are comfortable and appropriate for the season or the weather. They should be durable, washable clothes that will not be ruined in active outdoor play or with art materials. A complete change of clothes, including socks, should be provided in the event of an accident. Place *labeled* clothes in a large ziploc bag and label with the child's name. Shoes should give support and be appropriate for playing. Loose sandals, flip flops, crocs, jellies, and cowboy boots which slip off easily, inhibit activity and are, therefore, not suggested. All clothing that is removed (sweaters, coats, jackets, hats, etc.) should be clearly labeled with the child's name. Avoid jackets with drawstrings.

We are a Christian preschool. Clothing should reflect this. No objectionable or suggestive graphics, words, phrases, designs or attire are permitted. We require all parents and visitors to abide by this rule, as well.

PLAYTHINGS FROM HOME

The Preschool is well-equipped with many toys and materials; therefore, it is recommended that no toys be brought from home. This tends to cause problems with other children. The exception will be items that are brought for special "show and tell" days or items that go along with the teaching theme for the week. Please check with the teacher before bringing these.

Comfort toys for children staying for rest time (bears, blankets, etc.) may be brought if needed. Be sure they have your child's name attached. ***Guns, ropes, knives, and other toys which encourage rough and violent play are to be left at home at all times.***

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips will be taken throughout the year in order for the children to enrich and enlarge upon their classroom experiences. In order for your child to accompany us on the field trips scheduled, it will be necessary for you to complete and sign the special Field Trip Permission Form for each trip. Parents will be notified in advance of each trip. Parents will provide transportation for their own children for each field trip. Parent drivers must have a valid Virginia driver's license, current inspection sticker on the car being driven, and proof of liability insurance. All children must be in their car seats while being transported.

Field trips are for preschool student of that class only. No siblings are permitted on field trips.

MEDICATION

We will administer emergency medications to children such as inhalers, epi-pens, or other medications for which we have been supplied with a prescribed medication in its original container (prescription label stating child's name, name of medication, dosage and frequency), parental permission and the physician's directions. We ask that you schedule needed antibiotics or other medications around school hours. If your child is enrolled in our full day preschool program (7:00-6:00) and they are in need of medication other than emergency medications, please call the school office to discuss. All medications administered by the school are to be handed directly to the Preschool Director along with completed **Request for Administration of Medication Form** which is on the school website or in the school office. Medications will be administered and each dose documented by MAT-trained staff members. Medications are never to be transported to and from school in the child's bag. All medications will be kept out of reach of the children at all times. Parents are to take home the medication when it is no longer needed. ***We will not administer the first dose of a medication.***

Sunscreen lotion: Please apply sunscreen to your child before coming to school.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

We will make every effort possible to protect the health and safety of the children in our care. Parent cooperation in helping prevent the spread of communicable disease is of great importance. For the child's own protection and others in the school, parents should keep sick children at home. Children will not be accepted who have had a fever (greater than 100°) in the past 24 hours or who show any symptoms of illness, i.e., sore throat, nausea, vomiting, running nose, skin rash, diarrhea, inflamed eyes, discharging ear, coughing, ear ache, enlarged glands, flushed face. The Preschool has established a procedure for "hand-washing" by the staff and children before eating and after toiletry. Please reinforce this important means of interrupting the spread of disease at home. In the event that a child develops a fever (greater than 100°) or becomes ill, the child will be isolated from the other children. Parents will be called immediately to pick up the child. If we cannot reach you, we will then proceed with emergency numbers that you have provided.

Report all communicable diseases to the director immediately. When children have been exposed to a communicable disease listed in the Department of Health's current communicable disease chart (on our website), the parents will be notified within 24 hours or the next business day of the program being informed unless forbidden by law except for life-threatening diseases which must be reported to parents immediately.

In the case of accidental injury, we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. When necessary, we will call the child's physician, an ambulance or rescue squad, and utilize the emergency release you have provided. Parents are responsible for incurred expenses not covered by insurance.

ATTENDANCE

We feel a responsibility for knowing about your child. If your child is going to be absent, please call the office before arrival time and let us know the reason for the absence. This includes any trips out of town.

CAR POOL

Class lists will be available to parents at the parent orientation meeting. *Parents may arrange their own car pools of preferably 2 or 3, but not more than 4 students*, and provide the car pool lists to the director. Numbers will be assigned to each car pool and placards will be provided to each driver to identify car pools during dismissal time.

PARTIES

We will have several parties during the year. The room parents will be responsible for overseeing and helping party parent volunteers.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held at school twice a year on the days scheduled on the calendar. This will give you an opportunity to review your child's progress with the teacher. Preschool will be in session. The assistant teacher and a substitute will be in the classroom with the children while the teacher meets with the parents. Times for conferences will be arranged between teachers and parents at mutually convenient times. Telephone conferences will be arranged as needed.

DISCIPLINE

Positive guidance will be used in all situations to help the child develop self-control and assume responsibilities for his actions. The rules setting limits of behavior are consistent and known to everyone involved in the operation of the Preschool. The inappropriate behavior of a child will be gently redirected to a more positive behavior. Short periods of inactivity may be used to allow the child time to think and regroup, depending on the age of the child and discretion of the teacher. The staff will endeavor to show disapproval for the "act" but not for the "child." No child shall be subjected to harsh or physical discipline; nor shall loud, profane, threatening, frightening, or abusive language be used by staff or any person on the premises. Discipline shall not be associated with rest periods, toilet training, or food.

If a child is particularly disruptive, a conference may be held between parent and teacher where the behavior shall be discussed. If the behavior persists, dismissal may be necessary.

CHILD ABUSE

All Preschool staff is trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. Any child identified as a possible victim of child abuse/neglect will be reported directly to the Department of Social Services by the director or any classroom teacher within 24 hours. This is required by law.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, the Preschool School Board will make the decision to open, delay or close as soon as possible. The safety of our families and staff is always our first concern.

- Should Henrico County Public Schools close, we will close for all students and staff the first day.
- Should Henrico County close the second consecutive day, the School Board will decide if it is safe for our *full care* children and staff to return. (We will remain closed for our morning preschool program.) The Church office will update us on parking lot conditions. The lot must be passable in order for the preschool to open. Once that status has been determined, the preschool will notify families and staff through emails, facebook and Twitter. We will make every attempt to open, even if we are on a delayed opening schedule. The School Board will make their decision the night before the second day of closing, if Henrico publicizes its schedule change by then.
- Should Henrico County close the third consecutive day, the School Board will decide if it is safe for *all* children and staff to return, based on the above parameters.

Should weather conditions worsen during the school day which would necessitate a schedule change, we will notify families of any early closing (again, through emails, facebook and Twitter).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This program works very diligently toward establishing and maintaining collaborative partnerships with families. However, in the event that an unanticipated difficulty should arise, the following procedure should be used: Contact the teacher and the director to discuss the situation and allow enough time for the difficulty to be resolved. After sufficient time is given, if the situation is not resolved and further discussion is warranted, contact the director again, who will then appeal to the board of directors for direction. In the event that the conflict cannot be resolved by this procedure, a direct appeal may be made to the preschool board of directors. The board of directors will make the final disposition of the difficulty.

FACILITIES

The Preschool primarily uses the first room, two adjacent rooms, and the large room at the end of the Preschool/Children's building of River Road United Methodist Church. It will use the church fellowship hall for special activities, indoor playroom, and parent meetings. The director's office is located in the area where the Preschool and the main education building join. The facility features a handicapped accessible covered entry and other features which provide for the needs of the handicapped person. The Preschool provides secure entry with a camera/buzzer system. The kitchen facilities are available for classroom cooking experiences. The Preschool does not intend to provide food service. Parents will bring the mid-morning snack and lunch, if applicable. The maximum number of children that the Preschool will enroll is determined by the local building inspector.

STAFF

Teachers are trained in early childhood education or a related field, and have experience in a Preschool setting. Assistants must be at least eighteen years old, possess a high school education or GED, and preferably have had previous experience with Preschoolers in a group setting. Staff must meet all state requirements regarding health and safety. All staff will be certified annually by a practicing physician to be free from any disability which would prevent them from caring for children. Criminal record checks will be made on each staff person. At least one staff person trained in CPR/First Aid will be present at the center whenever children are present. State requirements for student/teacher ratio will be met to insure adequate supervision of students.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Darcey Johnson, pastor

Jaimey Honea, co-chair

Casey Emery

Lynda Weston

Joan Brennan, OACP Director

Melanie Dooley, co-chair

Ashley Barrett

Michael Wriston

Karen Goree