Handbook

2026 – 2027

St. Mark Preschool
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Welcome to St. Mark Preschool

We are happy that you are sharing your child with us, and hope that his or her preschool experience will be an enjoyable and meaningful one. Working together we can help your child develop his or her full potential.

St. Mark has a long history of preschool education for young children dating back to the late 1940s. It started as a Kindergarten, then a nursery school, and now a preschool. We renewed our commitment with a new beginning in September 2003 with the opening of a preschool for three and four-year-old children.

St. Mark Preschool admits students of any race, color, or national or ethnic origin to all of the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and athletic or other school-administered programs.

Preschool Staff

Idonia Klunk – Co-Director
Allison Wentz – Co-Director and Teacher 3-Year-Old Classes
Maddie Alexander – Teacher 4-Year-Old Classes
Cheree O'Connor – Teacher's Assistant 3-Year-Old Classes
Casi Sinnott – Teacher's Assistant 4-Year-Old Classes
Karen Amoss – Teacher's Aide 3-Year-Old Tues./Thurs. Class
Lindsey Crawford – Teacher's Aide 4-Year-Old AM Class

Preschool Board

Idonia Klunk – Co-Director
Allison Wentz – Co-Director and Teacher 3-Year-Old Classes
Maddie Alexander – Teacher 4-Year-Old Classes
Rev. Kirk Griffin – Pastor of St. Mark Lutheran
Kathy Gates – St. Mark Council Representative and Preschool Treasurer
Kate Klunk – St. Mark Council Representative
Martha Lippy – St. Mark Council Representative

Mission Statement

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with information concerning the educational program(s) in which your child will be participating. Throughout our programs for children ages 3-5 years, we hope to provide you with an experience that will leave you and your child with happy memories as well as provide a basis for future education.

Our purpose is to introduce your child to a friendly, safe, and non-competitive learning environment where each child can become self-confident and enjoy learning. We also stress the nurture of beginning relationships away from the family structure. While providing a learning experience, we plan to give your child opportunities to associate socially with other children and to learn to relate to adults other than his or her own parents. The educational programs and instructional activities with the children are managed by the Preschool Staff.

This preschool is a non-denominational program provided for the benefit of any eligible child. It is a ministry of the people of St. Mark Lutheran Church and is administered by the Preschool Board, a subcommittee of the St. Mark Christian Education Committee. The school is operated on a non-profit basis and supported solely by registration, monthly tuition fees, fundraisers, and the generosity of the people of St. Mark.

Table of Contents

3-Year-Old Class ……	page 3
4-Year-Old Class ……..	page 4
Scholarships ……	page 5
General Information ……	pages 5-6
Parent Cooperation ……..……..…….	page 6
Toilet Training Policy ……..……	page 7
Arrival/Dismissal ……..……..	page 8
Snacks ……..……	page 8
Illness ……..…….	pages 9-10
Inclement Weather Policy ……..…….	page 10
St. Mark Preschool Parent/Guardian Behavioral Policy ……..…….	page 11

3-Year-Old Class
(3/4-Year-Old Program)

Who is eligible? Children who have reached the age of at least 3 years old by September 1st of the current program year are invited to join this program. Children must be toilet trained (see page 7).

When does the class meet? There are two class sessions. One class meets on Monday and Wednesday mornings, and the other class meets on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Each class begins promptly at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 11:15 a.m. The school year begins in September and ends in May.

How large are the classes? Class size is limited to a maximum of 8 children for the Monday/Wednesday class. There will be 1 qualified teacher and 1 assistant for the Monday/Wednesday class. Class size is limited to a maximum of 12 children for the Tuesday/Thursday class. There will be 1 qualified teacher and 2 assistants for the Tuesday/Thursday class.

What are the costs?
Registration Fee: There is a **$50.00** registration fee. This registration fee is non-refundable and is due at the time you register your child in the preschool. This fee will hold a place in the class for your child for the school year. The fee is used for purchasing supplies, materials, equipment, and to cover other start-up costs prior to the September opening.

Monthly Tuition Fee: There will be nine non-refundable monthly tuition payments of **$105** or **$945** per year. The first payment is due **August 1st**. The eight remaining payments will be due by the first class of each month thereafter. The last tuition payment is due the first class of April. We accept cash or checks. Please make checks payable to St. Mark Preschool.

Late Payments: Since the smooth operation of the preschool is financed primarily through tuition, it is IMPORTANT that the payment is made on time**. If tuition is not paid by the 15th of the month, a late fee of $10 may be added to the tuition fee.** The late fee amounts paid will be added to our Scholarship Fund.

4-Year-Old Class

(4/5-Year-Old Program – Pre-Kindergarten)

Who is eligible? Children who have reached the age of at least 4 years old by September 1st of the current program year are invited to join this program. The curriculum of this class is geared to children who will enter kindergarten the following school year. Children must be toilet trained (see page 7).

When does the class meet? This class is held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. There are two sessions. The AM Class begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 11:45 a.m. The PM Class begins at 12:30 p.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m. The school year begins in September and ends in May.

How large is the class? Class size is limited to a maximum of 17 children for the AM class. There will be 1 qualified teacher and 2 assistants for the AM class. Class size is limited to a maximum of 11 children for the PM class. There will be 1 qualified teacher and 1 assistant for the PM class.

What are the costs?

Registration Fee: There is a **$50.00** registration fee. This registration fee is non-refundable and is due at the time you register your child in the preschool. This fee will hold a place in the class for your child for the school year. The fee is used for purchasing supplies, materials, equipment, and to cover other start-up costs prior to the September opening.

Monthly Tuition Fee: There will be nine non-refundable monthly tuition payments of **$185** or **$1,665** per year. The first payment is due **August 1st**. The eight remaining payments will be due by the first class of each month thereafter. The last tuition payment is due the first class of April. **All tuition payments must be paid in full by May 15th for your child to participate in graduation.** We accept cash or checks. Please make checks payable to St. Mark Preschool.

Late Payments: Since the smooth operation of the preschool is financed primarily through tuition, it is IMPORTANT that the payment is made on time. **If tuition is not paid by the 15th of the month, a late fee of $10 may be added to the tuition fee.** The late fee amounts paid will be added to our Scholarship Fund.

Scholarships

A limited amount of money to aid tuition costs is available on a first come, first served basis according to need. An application may be picked up at the church office or you can download one at www.stmarkpreschoolhanover.weebly.com. Applications must be returned to the church office Attn: Idonia Klunk by July 15th. The amount awarded will be based on need and the amount of money available. **Late applications may be considered if money is still available.**

General Information

Orientation: A Parent-Child Orientation Session will be held for each class the week before school begins.

School Calendar: A calendar of events for the entire school year will be handed out at the orientation session.

Curriculum: Each preschool program has separate and specific units of study appropriate to that age group. During the year, the units of study include the following:

1. Daily organized lessons on the units planned for each class
2. Crafts and artwork
3. Free play
4. Organized play
5. Storytime
6. Musical activities and finger plays
7. Educational games
8. Activities for small and large motor skills
9. Parties and special programs for the various holidays

Discipline: Our program uses a Positive Reinforcement and Behavior Modification model to promote appropriate conduct in a supportive setting. By highlighting and praising appropriate behavior, children gain a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Additionally, observing peers being recognized for positive actions fosters a classroom culture where others are encouraged to follow suit. As part of the classroom's behavior management approach, brief time-outs may be used as a support strategy. Before returning to group activities, the child will be informed of the reason for the time-out.

Clothing: The children should be dressed appropriately for the weather conditions. Please provide adequate outerwear to keep your child warm during outside playtime. If the wind chill temperature is above 32° and the grass/mulch is dry, we may be going outside for playtime. **For your child's safety, totally closed shoes with rubber soles are highly recommended.** We encourage you to dress your child in clothing that is easy for the child to manage in the bathroom. **Please, no bodysuits, leotards, bib overalls, or other clothing that is difficult for children to handle alone.**

Show and Tell: Show and Tell Days will be assigned to each child. Children should bring in one item to share with the class. Suggested items are things from nature, pictures from a place the child has visited, collections, something the child has made, a favorite book, or items about colors, shapes or numbers.

Field Trips: The 4-Year-Old Classes may utilize field trips as part of their curriculum. For a child to attend a field trip, an adult must be present. These dates will be announced ahead of time for you to make arrangements to be present.

Social Media: Please be aware that some parents do not want their child to be pictured on social media. Please be conscious of that if you post any pictures from St. Mark Preschool on your social media. You should only post pictures of your child unless you know that it is ok for the other child/children in the picture to be on social media.

Fundraisers: During the school year we will be having fundraisers to help fund the preschool. Costs continue to rise so we have these fundraisers to help keep our tuition prices down. We appreciate our families participating in the fundraisers.

Parent Cooperation

- The successful operation of St. Mark Preschool will depend on open communication with the families and staff.
- All procedures and protocols are designed to help maintain the safety of our families, children, and staff.
- All updates and changes to any of our policies will be sent out via email or text.

Toilet Training Policy

At St. Mark Preschool, we are committed to providing an academic learning environment, rather than a daycare setting. **All children attending our program must be fully toilet trained, as we do not provide toilet training services.**

We understand that young children are still developing independence with restroom routines. If your child needs help, our staff is available to assist with tasks such as getting on and off the toilet, wiping after a bowel movement, and managing clothing like pulling up pants or fastening buttons and zippers.

To ensure a smooth and hygienic experience for all children, the following guidelines apply:

Urinary Accidents:
• If a child wearing underwear experiences a urinary accident, a staff member will assist them in changing their clothing. **Parents must ensure their child has extra underwear and a change of clothes in their backpack at all times.**
• If a child has multiple urinary accidents, they will be required to wear a pull-up.
• Staff will only change pull-ups **if they are heavily soiled.**

Fecal Accidents:
• If a child has a fecal accident, a staff member will assist them in changing their clothes. Again, **parents must provide extra underwear and clothing in their child's backpack.**

Our staff focuses on fostering academic and social development and cannot provide frequent assistance with toileting accidents. If a child continues to have repeated accidents, the following actions may be taken:
• Parents may be required to come in during class to change their child.
• Parents may be asked to withdraw their child until they are fully toilet trained.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining a supportive and structured learning environment for all students. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please reach out to one of the preschool directors.

Arrival/Dismissal of Students

<u>At Arrival</u>:

- Staff will assist children in entering the building at the appropriate drop-off location. We will open the car door to assist the child out of the car.

<u>At Departure</u>:

- If the weather is nice and the children are outside at dismissal, parents/guardians can pick up the children at the playground.
- If the weather is bad or the children are inside at dismissal, parents/guardians can pick up the children in the hallway adjacent to the fellowship hall.
- Please be on time to pick up your child. Be sure to inform the teacher about carpools because the children will not be released to anyone other than a parent or guardian unless the teacher has been notified. A license with picture identification will be required when an unfamiliar person picks up the child.

Snacks

Each family will be asked to provide a snack on a rotating basis. While sweet snacks are acceptable on special occasions, please bring a healthier low sugar snack on regular days such as

Small pretzels	Yogurt Tubes
Crackers	Teddy Grahams
Granola bars	Goldfish Crackers
Apple slices, grapes, etc.	Fruit Gummies

Remember this is only a snack so you only need to send in one small snack per child.

If your child suffers from food allergies, please let the teacher know. We recommend that you send in some alternative snacks for them to have if the snack provided to the class is not appropriate for them.

Illness

- If you answer yes to any of the following questions, your child should stay home from school.

Within the past 24 hours, has your child experienced any of the following?	
1. Persistent cough	Yes / No
2. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	Yes / No
3. Sore throat	Yes / No
4. Fever greater than 100	Yes / No
5. Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea within the last 24 hours	Yes / No
6. Have you given fever reducing medicine for a fever within the last 24 hours? (**Children may not receive any fever reducing medication 24 hours prior to their arrival to St. Mark Preschool.** This policy is necessary to be able to detect any sign of illness that may be masked by the medication. If your child is receiving fever reducing medication, ie. Tylenol, Motrin, Ibuprofen, etc. for teething, ear pain, etc, they must be monitored at home.)	Yes / No

- Should a child become ill while in school, parents will be required to pick up the child immediately. The child will be isolated from the other children until the parent arrives.
- In case of an emergency where no one can be reached, the child will be taken to Hanover Hospital, with all expenses the responsibility of the parents. **A completed Emergency Authorization form with two signatures is required and can be returned no later than the Orientation Session.**

The following is a list of specific diseases and the time the child must remain out of school.

COVID-19 – If your child tests positive for COVID-19 your child may return to school provided your child has no new symptoms and has been fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.

Chicken Pox – 6 days after the appearance of the last crop of vesicles (6 days from the last pox occurring).

Strep Infection and/or Tonsillitis – You must provide written documentation from a doctor clearing them to return to school.

Head Lice – You must provide written documentation from a doctor clearing them to return to school.

Pink Eye – 24 hours after institution of appropriate therapy prescribed by a doctor.

Skin Infections – Impetigo (crusty sores), Scabies (itch), Ringworm – You must provide written documentation from a doctor clearing them to return to school.

Whooping Cough – 4 weeks from onset or 7 days from the institution of appropriate therapy prescribed by a doctor.

Hand Foot and Mouth - You must provide written documentation from a doctor clearing them to return to school.

Inclement Weather Policy

In the event of inclement weather, your child's teacher will text you about closings or delays. We usually wait until morning to make our final decision about closings, so please be patient.

3-YEAR-OLD CLASS SNOW POLICY

- If we delay classes due to weather, the 3-Year-Old classes will start at 10:30 a.m. and end at 12:15 p.m.

4-YEAR-OLD AM CLASS SNOW POLICY

- If we delay classes due to the weather, the 4-Year-Old AM class will start at 10:30 a.m. and end at 12:30 p.m.
- If we delay classes due to the weather, the 4-Year-Old PM class will start at 1:15 p.m. and end at 3:15 p.m.

St. Mark Preschool Parent/Guardian Behavioral Policy

At St. Mark Preschool, our priority is to foster a **safe, caring, and respectful** environment for children, staff, and parents/guardians. To uphold this standard, **unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated.** Parents or guardians who engage in such behavior may face **dismissal from the program.**

- Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to: The use of abusive or offensive language, including harassment, threats, yelling, rudeness, and profanity
- Theft or destruction of property
- Physical or verbal abuse toward children, staff, or other parents
- Defiance of authority

To ensure a positive atmosphere, parents **must not** approach other parents or children directly regarding incidents that occur at the Preschool. **All concerns must be addressed through the teacher or director.**

In the event of an incident, the following actions will be taken:

- The parent/guardian will be required to meet with staff to determine whether the child may remain in the program
- Continued enrollment will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the severity of the incident
- If the family is permitted to stay, any further occurrences of unacceptable behavior will result in termination from the program

Additionally, **alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and smoking are strictly prohibited on preschool premises.** No child will be released to an individual who appears intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

Our commitment is to maintain a nurturing and respectful space where every child can thrive. Thank you for your cooperation in supporting a positive preschool experience for all.