

GOD'S GIFTS



Weekday Preschool

Parent Handbook
2023-2024



Dear Parents,

Welcome to God's Gifts Weekday Preschool formerly known as Hartwell FUMC Preschool! We are very excited about the upcoming school year and are looking forward to having your child in our program. We changed our name to reflect our passion to look at each child as a gift and all the gifts we are afforded by God. "Every good and perfect gift is from above." James 1:17a As part of the education ministry of the church, the purpose of our preschool program is to offer an introduction to school life as a positive experience. We include activities such as literacy, number sense, sensory, fine and gross motor skills development, learning centers, music, chapel, science, stories, field trips, play and interaction in our program.

The preschool program is designed to help each child grow spiritually, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically. Each child is encouraged to accept responsibility, work with others, make and obey rules, express himself/herself and learn to listen and follow directions.

We wish to make the transition from home to kindergarten a happy and enjoyable one. Please read through the handbook and return the last page signed. Thank you for sharing your child with us this year!

Sincerely,

Emily Davis, Preschool Director

Preschool Staff

Director: Mrs. Emily Davis (706)436-7936 (cell)
(706)376-3166 (church)

Teachers: Four-Year-Old Class: Mrs. Laurie Hodges
Mrs. Amber Sorrells

Three-Year-Old Classes: Mrs. Nicole Wheless
Mrs. Dianne Stone

Young 3/ older 2's Class: Mrs. April Bowers
Mrs. Amber Martin

Two-Year-Old Class: Mrs. Angela Keifer
Mrs. Teresa Jones

Church Staff

Pastor: Dr. R. Allen Stewart

Music Director: Mrs. Lynne Glasco

Children's Ministry: Mrs. JoAnn Stone

Youth Ministry: Ms. Abby Ortiz

Mission

Our mission at God's Gifts Weekday Preschool is to help each child to experience Christ's love while developing spiritually, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically, in order to reach their full potential.

Philosophy

God's Gifts Weekday Preschool believes that every child should have an opportunity to develop in a loving and God-centered environment. Our staff is dedicated to the growth and development of all the children. Our goal is for each child to know that they are a child of God and to provide a warm, loving, and safe environment where they can feel secure as they discover the world around them.

Objectives

- To provide a spiritual foundation for children
- To encourage the development of children spiritually, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically
- To help children know themselves as unique individuals and a child of God
- To provide developmentally appropriate curriculum to meet each child's individual needs
- To provide opportunities for children to develop basic learning skills in the areas of pre-reading, pre-writing, math and science integrated in daily activities
- To help children develop trusting and responsible relationships with children and adults
- To provide opportunities for children to succeed at the tasks suitable to their developmental level

God's Gifts Weekday Preschool Operations

God's Gifts Weekday Preschool Board

The God's Gifts Weekday Preschool Board advises the Preschool. The functions of the Board are to develop policy for the preschool, to assist in the selection of personnel, to develop a workable budget, and to give advice and counsel to the Preschool Director and staff as needed.

Admission Policies + Preschool Fees

Children will be enrolled in HFUMC Preschool based on the following basis.

- Members of the Hartwell First United Methodist Church
- Children already in the program
- Children with the earliest registration date

Acceptance is contingent upon registration on or before March 13th. After March 13th, the child's application will be placed in order of receipt.

A non-refundable fee of \$160 is required to secure your child's placement in the preschool program. Includes a t-shirt to wear on field trips.

Two-Year-Old Class:	Monday – Friday Child must be 2 by the first day of class. Tuition: \$200 per month
Two-Year-Old Class:	Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays Child must be 2 by the first day of class. Tuition: \$150 per month
Two-Year-Old Class:	Tuesdays and Thursdays Tuition: \$100 per month
Three-Year-Old Class:	Monday – Friday Child must be 3 by September 1. Must be potty trained* (policy included) Tuition: \$175 per month
Four-Year-Old Class:	Monday – Friday Child must be 4 by September 1. Must be potty trained* (policy included) Tuition: \$175 per month

General Information

Discrimination Clause

Services are provided and admissions/referrals are made without regard to race, color, or religious creed, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or national origin.

Curriculum

A well rounded, developmentally appropriate curriculum is used at HFUMC Preschool. *Orange Curriculum* provides the basis for the ways in which we will help your child begin to build a foundation of spiritual understanding. Our preschool follows the Georgia Early Learning Standards which can be located at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/childcareservices/georgiaearlylearningstandards.aspx> and Play to Learn Curriculum

Curriculum Goals

- Spiritual: To help children be aware that they are a child of God and are therefore worthy of his love, acceptance and support
- Social: To help children feel comfortable in a school setting, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel like they are part of a group
- Emotional: To help children develop self-confidence, independence and self-control and have a positive attitude toward life
- Cognitive: To help children become confident learners by helping them to acquire learnings skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use their words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings
- Physical: to help children increase their large and small motor skills

A typical preschool week will include:

- Learning centers
- Circle time
- Bible stories
- Literacy
- Number sense
- Motor skills
- Sensory
- Art

Special Activities will include:

- Chapel
- Music
- P.E.
- Science
- Special Readers
- Field Trips

Tuition and Late Fees

Registration fees and tuition payments are ***non-refundable***. No reimbursements are made for vacation, illness, or the closing of school due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances. Ten tuition payments are required from August – May. All tuition is due the 1st school day of each month. **Any payment received after the 10th of the month should include a \$15 late fee. If a check is returned to us, a \$25 processing fee will be charged.** Checks should be made payable to HFUMC Preschool. You may pay the year’s full tuition in August for a 5% discount.

If you withdraw your child from HFUMC Preschool, please give the Preschool Director written notice. After the school year begins, one month’s written notice is required before a child is withdrawn. Without written notice, a parent is responsible for the next month’s tuition fee.

Preschool hours are 8:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please notify us as soon as possible.

Arrival and Departure

Optional Breakfast Buddies begins at 7:45 a.m. Students can bring their breakfast to enjoy while watching an educational show during this time (additional \$30 per month). **Preschool drop-off begins at 8:15 and ends at 8:30.** All children should enter through the back doors to the Education Building (at the circle drive). The preschool classrooms are located on the bottom floor of this building. Please make every effort to drop your child off on time. The doors will be locked at 8:30. If you arrive after that time, please check in with the director, and she will escort your child to their room. Once classes have started, we would like to keep the distractions to a minimum in order to maintain an optimal learning environment. This will also be the case in an early pick-up. Please wait for your child at the front desk so as not to disturb learning in progress.

Pick-up begins at 11:45 and ends at 12:00 at the circle drive. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please notify us as soon as possible. **You will be assessed a late fee of five dollars for every ten minutes that you are late.**

We will offer carpool line for drop-off and pick-up beginning Wednesday, 8/8 in the circle drive. You are always welcome to park in the gym parking lot (below the railroad tracks on the right) and walk with your child to the preschool entrance. Please also be mindful not to block the traffic on East Howell Street. **If the circle drive is full when you arrive, please drive to the gym parking lot and return to the carpool line when there is room to pull into the circle drive.**

School Calendar

HFUMC Preschool follows the calendar of the Hart County School System, with the exception of the start date and last day of school. The first day will be determined by the Director and is usually 2-3 week days after the start of the County schools. The last day of preschool will be May 24, 2023.

Emergency Closings/Inclement Weather

Rarely does any preschool have to close due to illness or contagious health reason of the children or staff; however, we reserve the right to close the HFUMC Preschool if too many children have become ill. Should there be any structural damage or condition to our building that would make it unsafe or unsuitable to occupy the building, we reserve the right to close the HFUMC Preschool. In the event of inclement weather, the HFUMC Preschool will follow the same closing as Hart County Schools.

Preparing for the first day

We want the first day of school to be a positive experience for you and your child. We would like to share some ideas that will help your child start the year off on a positive note.

- Set the tone for the day. Plan your schedule so your child will be well rested, unhurried, well fed, and relaxed for the day.
- Expect that your child will go to school happily and will have a good time. Use encouraging words with your child. They will sense if you are anxious.
- Talk about preschool in a positive way, and name certain activities they will do during the day.
- Please leave personal items such as blankets, pacifiers, lovies, toys etc. at home.

We encourage you to go through the car pool line, especially if you feel there may be some separation issues or anxieties. Be assured that your child's teacher will comfort and calm your child's fears and/or anxieties. Talk with your child's teacher about specific concerns. They may have some helpful suggestions on how to make the transition to preschool easier.

Authorized Pickup

No child will be released to a person not authorized to pick up the child. The authorization form was included in the registration packet. Please notify us in writing if you need to make a change to your authorized adults for pick-up. If there is a change in your child's schedule, such as going home with another adult, please let us know. **Your child will not be released to anyone without their parent's written permission.** The person picking up your child must present a photo ID at carpool. If an emergency situation arises during the day, please call the school office at 706-376-3166. The preschool director will determine if permission will be given over the phone to ride home with someone from your Authorized Adults list. Please make sure that the person picking up your child has a photo ID. There will be no exceptions to this policy. The preschool will follow custody rulings made by the court.

Supervision

Two adults (lead teacher and assistant) will be assigned to each classroom. Both teachers shall remain with the class except for brief periods of time, such as for a teacher to use the restroom. Children should be supervised by sight and sound. 2 year olds will never be left out of a teacher's sight. Students 3 years old and older may be supervised by sound only for very brief periods. No child shall be left alone. Children are not permitted to access any area not approved for childcare. The kitchen should only be used as part of a planned, supervised learning experience. Construction and maintenance will only take place outside of time when children are present.

Contacting/Conferencing with the teacher

All teachers at the HFUMC Preschool want to foster good communication with their parents. Each classroom will provide the parents with the best way to communicate without disrupting instruction. Teachers will speak with you over the phone or arrange a conference time after school hours. Please send written notes when necessary as we cannot accept verbal messages from your child. Always make prior arrangement to conference with your child's teacher to discuss specific issues pertaining to your child. A note addressed to the teacher requesting an opportunity to speak privately may be placed in your child's book bag. The morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up is not an opportunity to have such personal discussions without prior arrangements. Teachers will send home reminders and updates monthly. You will receive a monthly calendar from the director. If you have a special situation that needs immediate attention please contact Emily Davis (director) at 706-376-3166.

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the school. Parental involvement is very much appreciated, especially on field trips and class parties. Please discuss with your teacher opportunities that will be most helpful to the classroom.

For 2 and 3 year olds, teachers will conduct phone conferences in fall and spring regarding each student's progress based upon general observations from the classroom and playground as well as learning and behavioral progress assessments.

For 4 year olds, teachers will hold a phone conference in the fall and in-person conference in the spring based upon general observations from the classroom and playground as well as learning and behavioral progress assessments.

Health and Safety

Health Records/Immunizations

Hart County Health Department requires that we have on file a complete record of immunization on or before the first day of school. The required state form (Form 3231) is available at your local pediatrician's office and health department. Failure to comply with this policy will result in your child's dismissal from the preschool until such form is present. In the event your child becomes ill during the school day, we will call you. If you are unavailable, we will call one of your emergency numbers. **It is your responsibility to keep all phone numbers current.**

Please let us know within 24 hours if your child contracts a CONTAGIOUS or COMMUNICABLE disease (such as Covid 19, chicken pox, strep, pink eye, lice, pin worms, viral infections, mumps, measles, scarlet fever, or fifth's disease), and we will notify other parents as necessary. The preschool will make every effort to protect the health and safety of the children. Before students enter the preschool, we will be taking temperatures. Any student with a fever (100.4°F or greater) will need to return home. Students use hand sanitizer upon entering the classroom.

For the child's own protection and that of others in the school, your child should not attend school when they have any of the following symptoms:

- Severe cold
- Persistent cough
- Green discharge from nose or eyes
- Sore throat
- Ear ache
- Swollen glands
- Fever*
- Nausea or vomiting*
- Diarrhea*
- Rashes*

*Please note that your child must be free of these symptoms without the aid/use of medicine for 24 hours before returning to school. Covid 19 will require a quarantine of 5 days.

Allergies/Asthma

All allergies need to be reported to your child's teacher and an Allergy/Asthma Plan completed if necessary. Due to the increasing prevalence of food allergies and in order to keep all students safe, **we ask that students bring their own snack from home each day.** The Preschool will have Goldfish and animal crackers available for students without a snack.

Medications

Staff of the HFUMC Preschool will not administer any medications to children during the school day except medication for emergency allergic or asthmatic issues. Parents must sign a permission form allowing teachers to administer Benadryl or to use an Epi Pen or inhaler (provided by parent) if prescribed by a doctor.

Head Lice

If you determine that your child has head lice (live lice or nits), you must notify your child's teacher and the preschool director immediately. If the discovery of lice is made during school hours, you will be contacted to pick up your child. The infected child may not return to school:

1. Until the child has been treated and all live lice and nits (eggs) have been removed from the hair OR the child has a note from his/her physician stating that the child does not have head lice infestation and that no nits are visible; and
2. Until the child's teacher or preschool director inspects the child, at a time arranged with the parent, and finds the child to be free of live lice and nits.

Preparing and Serving Food

Prior to snack time or any other event where food will be served, tables will be sanitized using disinfectant wipes, and students and staff members will wash their hands following posted procedures. These procedures are posted near each sink, and students will be reminded to wash their hands thoroughly as well.

- Rinse hands with warm water, and apply soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds.

- Rinse well under warm water.
- Dry hands with a paper towel.

Accidents

All accidents involving injury are reported to the Director, who will complete an accident form that will be kept on file, and a copy will be sent home as well.

Emergency Situations

Evacuation routes are posted in each classroom. Procedures are followed by the HFUMC Preschool in the event of fire, tornado, and other emergency situations. Drills will be held during the year. Parents may access the preschool Safety Plan at the church office.

Cell Phone Use

For the safety of our children, cell phone use during morning and afternoon carpool is prohibited.

Child Abuse

No physical, sexual, or verbal abuse is tolerated at HFUMC Preschool. Additionally, whenever there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been physically injured or has suffered death by other than accidental means, has been neglected, exploited or deprived, sexually assaulted or exploited, such incident must be reported to the Department of Family and Children's Services. Information on child abuse is provided to staff members in Safe Sanctuary training. These policies will be followed without exception. If a staff member suspects a child in our care has been abused, the director will contact DFCS.

Discipline

One primary goal for HFUMC Preschool is to help children develop as good citizens and to live and grow in their relationships with others. We will work on many skills such as following directions, manners, sharing, turn taking, and playing and working cooperatively with others. These skills will provide them with a firm foundation for future educational success.

Discipline is not thought of as punishment. We want to teach children self-control and help them express their feelings in socially acceptable ways. Teachers will focus on positive behaviors. Teachers will establish clear rules that are reviewed daily. Children will be reminded of rules and taught appropriate behavior based on their developmental level. Teachers will use redirection and logical consequences for anyone breaking the rules. Occasionally, time out may be used to allow time for reflection. Time out is typically one minute per age of the child. Corporal punishment is not allowed.

Occasionally a child's behavior can affect the atmosphere of the classroom. These behaviors can include defiance, aggression, and disobedience. Some strategies that teachers may use might include:

- Assisting the child with appropriate words
- Rewarding kind/positive behavior
- Providing natural consequences for behavior
- Conferencing with parents in order to provide consistency between home and school

If a child's behavior becomes severe enough to interfere with the overall atmosphere of the classroom, the following steps will be taken:

- Conference with the parents, teachers, and director. They will work together to come up with recommendations to solve the issue.
- Parent will be required to pick up their child from school if an undesirable behavior becomes harmful to themselves or others.
- Parents and teachers will continue to meet and review the child's progress. The best interest of the child and the preschool program shall be the final determining factors in continued enrollment.

Biting Policy

It is not uncommon for very young children to bite. In children under three, it is considered to be a developmentally typical behavior; however, biting is upsetting, painful, and potentially dangerous. Biting is taken very seriously and is strongly discouraged. The following policy on biting has been developed for the benefit of the biter and the safety of the other children in the Hartwell First United Methodist Church Preschool.

Teachers respond to biting as follows:

- When a child bites another child, the teacher will offer comfort to the injured child. The bite will be carefully washed with soap and water. Teacher will check to see if any skin is broken and cold compress will be applied.

- The teacher will take the biter aside and get down to eye level and tell the child that biting hurts and you cannot hurt your friends.
- The teacher will try to determine whether the bite was out of frustration, territorialism, or lack of communication skills. The teacher will then try to give the child the words to use in future situations. "I know that John had the truck that you wanted and you were upset. Next time say, 'John, can I have a turn?'"
- The parents will be informed when a child has bitten or has been bitten; however, names will not be disclosed. The teacher will record the biting incident with the director.

Actions that may be taken to stop a child from biting:

- Notify the parents and provide information about biting
- Schedule a conference with the parents, teacher, and Preschool Director and discuss developmentally appropriate techniques to stop the behavior

Repeated biting by children three and older may reflect a child's inability to function in the group setting. It may be necessary to remove persistent biters from the program for the benefit of the biter and the safety of the other children in the program. Periodic reviews and parent conferences with the HFUMC Preschool Director and teaching staff will help determine whether continued enrollment is in the best interest of the child and the program.

Bullying Policy

Bullying, in any form, is considered unacceptable at HFUMC Preschool. Any behavior that is considered bullying will be recorded and addressed immediately. Any staff member who becomes aware of a bullying incident shall intervene by:

- stopping the child who is bullying from harming the other child or children.
- explaining to the child doing bullying why his/her behavior is not acceptable.
- reassuring the child or children who have been bullied.
- helping the child who has done the bullying to recognize the impact of their action.
- supporting the individual who has been bullied, keeping them under close supervision and checking his/her welfare regularly.
- discussing what has happened to the parents of the child who did the bullying and working out with them a plan for handling the child's behavior.
- sharing what has happened with the parents of the child who has been bullied, explaining that the child who did the bullying is being helped to adopt more acceptable ways of behaving.
- recording incidents of bullying on an incident log.
- reporting serious incidents of bullying to the director.
- taking more serious action if bullying behavior persists.

3- and 4-year-old Toilet Training Policy

Being toilet trained is an important developmental requirement signifying your child's readiness for preschool as well as providing a positive experience within a group setting. Therefore, we require children enrolled in 3 and 4 year old classes to be potty trained. We do not have the facilities or supplies required to change children in the classroom. "Accidents" can and do happen. "Accidents" by definition are unusual incidents and should only happen infrequently.

3 and 4 year old children who are potty trained:

- No longer wear diapers or pull-ups.
- Can tell the teacher when they need to go to the bathroom.
- Can attend to their own hygiene (Pulling clothes up and down, wiping, handwashing).
- Have fewer than 1-2 accidents per month.

While toilet training is new for many children this age, teachers and other staff will provide as much support as possible to help children be successful. Classrooms are equipped with bathrooms that children are allowed to use as needed. Adults encourage children to use the bathroom regularly throughout the day. Because children develop at different rates in this area, we know that this may be a deciding factor in whether or not you feel your child is ready for this type of program. Additional information about toilet training can be found on www.healthychildren.org.

If students are having accidents at school, we will adhere to the following procedures:

- Each child will be given a two week grace period from their initial start date in order to give them time to adjust to a new environment.
- If a child continues to have accidents, parents will be notified, and the child will need to stay home for two weeks for additional practice.
- After two weeks, the child may return to school. If the child has two accidents during a time span of less than 30 days, he/she will be withdrawn from the program.

Diapering Procedures

No child will be left unattended while being diapered or having their clothes changed on a diapering surface. Additionally, no teacher will be in a concealed area when diapering or providing potty assistance. An open door or presence of another staff member is required. These procedures will be followed to change the diaper of a child:

- Put on gloves. Clean gloves should be worn for each child while changing the diaper.
- Gloves are taken off as soon as the child's bottom is clean and before putting on the clean diaper.

- Dirty diapers and gloves must be put into a plastic garbage bag and disposed of properly.
- Diaper and re-dress the child.
- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Clean the changing mat with disinfecting wipe.

Safety

All outlets have an outlet cover when not in use.

Student safety information will be with teachers at all times.

Teachers will count heads many times during the day, but especially before leaving the room, upon arrival, and upon return. A student will never be allowed to leave the room without adult supervision.

The doors to the preschool area will remain locked at all times. These doors will only be unlocked or propped open during drop-off and pick-up times.

Cleaning materials will be stored out of children's reach or in a locked location.

First Aid supplies are located in the preschool office, each classroom, and in the gym. Teachers will carry safety backpacks containing first aid supplies to the playground and on field trips.

For information regarding specific emergency procedures, please see refer to the preschool's Safety Plan, which you can access from the church office. All staff members are expected to be familiar with and follow the school's Safety Plan in the event of an emergency.

Please report any safety concerns to the director.

Animal Policy

A pet may be brought to school for the children to observe for a short period of time during the school day. Parents will be notified in advance so that we can be made aware of any allergies. The pet owner must verify that the pet has received all necessary inoculations.

Plant Policy

Staff members are aware that certain plants are poisonous and will research any plant to be sure it is safe before bringing it into the preschool.

Water Play

Tubs for water play will be sanitized between their use by different groups. Children with cuts or sores will not be allowed to participate in water play. Children must always be supervised during water play.

Clean Up

Classrooms will be left clean and neat at the end of each day. Classroom carpets will be vacuumed, floors swept, tables wiped, and all supplies put away at the end of each day. All trash will be bagged and placed in the large trash can outside the preschool office.

Miscellaneous

Dress Policy

Please dress your child in practical comfortable play clothes. We will do a lot of painting, gluing, and other messy and fun activities. Tennis shoes that tie or have Velcro closures are best. Jellies, cowboy boots, sandals, or patent leather shoes are not recommended and can be dangerous on the playground. We will play outside approximately thirty minutes per day weather permitting, so please dress your child according to the weather.

Please put your child's name inside of all jackets, hats, sweaters, and backpacks. It will help the teachers to make sure everything gets home with the right child.

Please provide the following to the school:

- **A complete seasonal change of clothes in a large zip-lock bag with your child's name on it.** Label the Zip-lock with your child's name. We will keep these at school in case of an accident.

Class/Birthday Parties

Your child's class will have a number of class parties throughout the year. You will be notified in advance of the opportunity to participate in parties. All parties must be approved by your child's teacher before planning. Your child may celebrate his/her birthday at school if you wish. You may provide a special snack or treat however, no presents should be received. Parents are welcome on these occasions, but please prearrange this with the child's teacher. **Please do not distribute invitations to birthday parties held off school property in children's book bags unless all children in the class are included.**

School Pictures

Your child will have the opportunity to have his/her picture taken in the fall and spring. There is no obligation for parents to purchase these pictures. More information regarding time, dates, and packages will be sent home in your child's book bag.

Field Trips and Transportation of Children

Field trips will be planned approximately once per month. While parents sign a general release to participate in all preschool activities, including field trips, the director will provide notification and permission forms for each specific trip. Some field trips will have an additional fee for students and chaperone. Students will be transported on HFUMC's minibuses. Safety is of utmost concern when taking children off campus. The adult/child ratio on field trips shall be 1:4. Name tags are discouraged as a safety concern, but students are encouraged to wear their preschool shirt for field trips.

Special Needs

A special needs child is defined as one who is physically, socially, emotionally, or behaviorally challenged and one that may require modification in a regular education classroom. After ample time for observation and adjustment to the classroom has been allowed, students may have difficulty performing at an appropriate developmental age level, have difficulty adjusting to school, and may disrupt the learning environment. While there is a wide range in meeting developmental milestones among preschool-aged children, occasionally a teacher may recognize a student who seems to have some delay. If a staff member is concerned a student may fall outside the normal range of development in the areas of speech, motor, emotional, or cognitive skills, he/she will discuss with the Director. Efforts will be made to make reasonable modifications in the classroom, to address the issue with parents, and to provide resource information regarding referrals to Hart Co. Special Services. If the parents/guardians consent to screening, the Director will contact Hart County Schools Special Services to refer the student for evaluation.



Handbook Agreement

Please return this page in the plastic folder provided at Meet the Teacher in your child's book bag on the first day of school.

I have received a copy of the HFUMC Preschool handbook. I have read and understood all policies and procedures of the program.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____