

Noah's Ark Preschool

Parent Handbook

2011-12



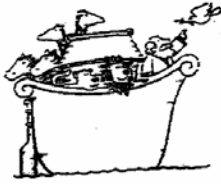
Welcome to

Noah's Ark Preschool

105 Gateshead Drive

McMurray, PA 15317

noahspreschool@comcast.net



22 years discovering each child's uniqueness

Noah's Ark Preschool is a nonprofit ministry of
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Preschool Office: 724-942-6699

Our Redeemer Church Office: 724-941-7467

Fax: 724-941-3262

**Website: [www.ourredeemer-peters.org/
preschool.html](http://www.ourredeemer-peters.org/preschool.html)**

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History

Noah's Ark was established in the Fall of 1988 as an outreach ministry of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church for their preschool children. Under the experienced teaching of Gerda Moul, a group of eight children met two mornings a week to hear Bible stories, sing songs, and share activities. Each year the number of children grew, more classes were formed, new staff members were added, and the curriculum expanded. A Board of Directors was formed in 1998 to govern the preschool. Members include parents, teachers, Director, and church representatives. During the 1998-99 school year, Noah's Ark met at St. Benedict's while Our Redeemer church building was expanded. We moved into our two new classrooms in the Fall of 1999. After the church expanded the fellowship hall in 2004, we added another classroom downstairs. Noah's Ark became a nationally accredited preschool (NAEYC) in 2006 and was re-accredited in 2011. Phase I of a natural outdoor playspace was constructed in the summer of 2010, the first in Western Pennsylvania.



Noah's Ark continues to be an outreach ministry for Our Redeemer and teaches children Bible stories and preserves Christian themes. We now serve approximately 120 children, ages 2-6.

Accreditation

Noah's Ark Preschool is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) having demonstrated compliance with their nationally recognized criteria for high-quality early childhood programs. www.naeyc.org

Noah's Ark Mission Statement

Our goal is to create a safe, nurturing and creative environment for each child. We strive to enhance social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive and spiritual development in order to build a foundation for life-long learning.

Philosophy

- ***A child's uniqueness*** We provide an atmosphere of trust and respect. We emphasize individual growth in a shared environment. We provide peer experiences that strengthen communication skills and enhance self-confidence.
- ***Parent Involvement*** We are a family-oriented, child-centered school that welcomes parents. Parents are an enhancement to our program, not an interruption.
- ***Low Student-Teacher Ratio*** This enables us to nurture, support and stimulate each child's discovery of his or her own special gifts. The teachers serve as a guide to be consulted by the child as discoveries are made with the emphasis on the child's self-control, rather than the teacher's control of the child.
- ***Christian-based Program*** This provides opportunities for spiritual development through Biblical stories, songs and dramatizations.

Developmental Goals for Children

1. **Social-emotional Development**—promoting children's social skills for diverse adult and peer relations, including listening, turn-taking, following directions, rule and routines, group participation, care for shared materials and conflict resolution.
2. **Physical Development**—giving opportunities to use growing bodies to develop small and large motor skills and coordination
3. **Early Literacy Development**—facilitating comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral language and progressing to written language.
4. **Early Mathematics and Science Development**—fostering a positive attitude toward learning through questioning, observing and experimenting with varied materials related to diverse themes.
5. **Creative Expression & Appreciation for the Arts**—cultivating each child's ability to express ideas and emotions through art, music, movement and drama.

6. Social Studies and Health & Safety Development—encouraging each child's pride in individual characteristics, families, experiences and accomplishments and their roles in their community. Children are responsible for personal care, actions and words to keep our classroom safe.
7. Family Involvement—working closely with families to promote the child's learning and well-being.
8. Christian Education—providing opportunities for spiritual development through Biblical stories and songs.

Child & Family Outcome Statement

Children will experience a loving environment that offers safe, fun and challenging opportunities to learn. Families are considered an enhancement, not an interference. They are welcome partners who may assist in the classroom for a first hand view of their child's learning experiences. Teachers and administration will serve as a support system to the families during their child's early developmental years.



Multicultural Policy

A goal of Noah's Ark Preschool is to provide the socio-emotional and educational conditions in which every child garners self-respect and respect for the differences in others. This assists children's functioning not only in their own cultural community, but builds children's cultural competencies for humankind. We seek to recognize, appreciate and respect the uniqueness of each child. We cultivate each child's ability to think critically about biases, hoping to instill the ability to stand up for her/him self and for others, in the face of bias.

Staff

Noah's Ark Preschool staff is made up of a full-time Director, Administrative Assistant, Financial Administrator, and fifteen qualified co-teachers

committed to each child's total development. The staff also includes a Spanish teacher, art teacher and music teacher. Educational specialists and therapists from public and private agencies also assist the staff and their clients in our inclusive classrooms.

Program



At Noah's Ark we have a child-centered program. The teachers prepare an engaging learning environment for exploring a theme. They use a group meeting time each day to set the stage for the investigation and to introduce relevant concepts. The children are given multiple choices of activities to explore in a variety of areas. The staff monitors the activities, so that we may facilitate the children's learning and challenge them at an appropriate level. The curriculum is structured to encourage the child to explore both on his own and in a social context with others.

Children's explorations enrich their development of concepts related to the theme and strengthen their skills in all areas. They extend and apply their concepts by experimenting with various materials in the school, and they express their understanding by creating their own representations in a variety of media. Through explorations, the children develop

- A sense of themselves as competent learners,
- Strategies for collaborating with peers and adults,
- Approaches to communicating their ideas verbally and visually,
- Means of discovering new ideas about physical properties,
- Skills for small motor manipulation of tools and materials as well as large motor actions, and
- Means for expressing their creative ideas.

A typical preschool schedule would include:

Free Choice Time: The children independently choose from a variety of activity centers. These centers include block, dramatic play, manipulative, library, science, sensory, or writing centers.

"Our Meeting": The children participate in one or more Circle/Group Times each day. The group gathers with their teachers to discuss the school day, sing songs, listen to stories, discuss calendar and weather, or play a group game.

Discovery Time: During this time, the children choose from independent or teacher-directed activities often related to the theme or attend chapel.

Playground/Gross Motor Time: Children go outside, weather permitting, each day to participate in sand play, dramatic play, climbing, sliding, games, and, on occasion, riding their bike. During inclement weather, we use the social hall or areas downstairs for gross motor activities.

Enrollment and Operating Schedule

The preschool year is nine months, September through May. NAP offers the following classes:

Two Year Olds - suggested age is 2 by October 1st

Mommy & Me, Friday morning 9:30 - 11:30

Time for Tots, Monday/Friday morning

9:30 -11:30

Three Year Olds - suggested age is 3 by October 1st

Monday & Wednesday 9 - 11:30

Tuesday & Thursday 9 - 11:30 or 12:30 - 3:00

Four Year Olds - suggested age is 4 by October 1st

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9:00 - 11:30 or

12:30 - 3:00

Five Year Olds - suggested age is 5 by October 1st

Monday, 9:00-11:30; Tuesday, Wednesday &

Thursday, 12:30-3:00

Lunch Bunch - all enrolled students are eligible
Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 11:30 - 12:30

Stay and Play - all enrolled students are eligible
Wednesday 12:30 - 2:30

Friday Workshop - age 3 by October 1st to 5 years old
Friday 9:00 - 11:30

Friday Workshop

Workshop is offered on Friday mornings. It is theme-based play. It is used by some families as a one-day program; other families use it as an enrichment class, in addition to the regular classroom. Other families use it on occasion for a drop-in program, space permitting.



This program is multi-aged, 3-7. There is limited space, so we suggest that you sign up ahead of time.

Registration

In-house registration, offered in early February is open to:

- Children enrolled in NAP and their siblings who plan to attend the following fall
- The children of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
- Children of alumni families

Community registration is held after the in-house registration is completed and is open to the general community.

There is a NONREFUNDABLE registration fee of \$50 or \$75 per family, excluding members of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Tuition, Refunds and Withdrawals

Tuition is based on an annual fee from August through April. Therefore, no credit is allowed for illness, holidays, or vacations. The first month's tuition must be paid by May 15th for fall enrollment, or, when the registration form is submitted. The

first month's tuition payment is refundable (less a \$35 administrative fee) if the Director is notified in writing 30 days prior to the start of school. Tuition checks should be made payable to **Noah's Ark Preschool** and mailed to 105 Gateshead Drive, McMurray, PA 15317, or placed in the preschool mailbox at the entrance of Noah's Ark.

Tuition for the 2011 - 2012 school year is as follows:

Class	Tuition	Monthly Payments	Duration of Payments
3's class	\$1080	\$120	9 monthly payments
4's class	\$1530	\$170	9 monthly payments
5's class	\$1665	\$185	9 monthly payments
Mommy & Me	\$480	\$60	8 monthly payments
Time for Tots	\$480	\$60	8 monthly payments
Friday Workshop		\$70	9 monthly payments or \$20 per session
Lunch Bunch			\$6 per session
Stay N Play			\$15 per session

Tuition for the 2011 - 2012 school year is due on the following dates:

May 15, 2011
 September 15, 2011
 October 15, 2011
 November 15, 2011
 December 15, 2011
 January 15, 2012
 February 15, 2012
 March 15, 2012
 April 15, 2012

A late fee of \$10 will be assessed to a payment made after the 15th of each month. There is an option of paying in full by September 15th. If you pay in full, you will receive a 3% discount. There is also a discount on tuition for siblings concurrently enrolled in Noah's Ark Preschool.

If early withdrawal becomes necessary, the tuition responsibility ends 30 days after the Director is notified in writing.

Scholarships are made available through private contributions and fundraisers. Scholarships are awarded yearly and applications are held in the strictest confidence. If your family experiences an unexpected financial emergency, please contact the Director for a scholarship application.

Security Precautions

There are security cameras at each entrance to the preschool that can be viewed in the preschool and church offices. Doors are locked after children arrive.

Peters Township Fire Department makes unannounced visits to our preschool to guide the children through fire drills. The children practice with their teachers and choose a designated place to meet outside. The school has an automatic alarm and smoke detection system that is connected to the fire department.

In addition to fire evacuation drills, we also have implemented plans for emergency evacuations and weather-related procedures. We have kits (water, blankets, snacks, radio, flashlight) ready in the event that we need to take shelter in the conference room downstairs or in case we need to be out of the building for a length of time. Preschool staff would have access to family cell phone numbers for your immediate notification. All of our teachers have had CPR and first-aid training. In addition, a cell phone is within easy access (to call 911, if necessary) when we are on the playground.

Discipline

Noah's Ark Preschool staff uses positive approaches, such as active listening, to help children behave constructively, as well as to encourage sharing, caring and active participation in conflict resolutions.

The primary form of discipline used in the classroom is proactive. Methods used include redirection of focus, reminders of the classroom rules, as well as expectations

and teacher-facilitated arbitration when necessary. Classroom rules are few in number, clearly defined and consistently followed.

When a child is unable to respond positively to appropriate and consistent expectations, the teachers and director will maintain open communication with the parent for the purpose of developing a strategy that will enable the child to be successful. In some cases, the parents may be encouraged to consult an outside agency.

Suspected Child Abuse

Mandated reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately to the Youth and Family Services agency, after consulting with the director. Due to their contact with children, preschool teachers and child development professional are considered mandated reporters.



Arrival & Pickup Times

As busy parents we know the value of a few extra minutes to prepare for our day! Our teachers have the same need to "get a few things done" before the children arrive. So if you need to arrive earlier than the starting time, please plan to stay with your child so that the preparations for the day can be completed. It is equally important to be prompt when you pick up your child(ren). They often worry and feel anxious when you are late.

Your child will only be released to a parent or person authorized by you on the emergency form. It is imperative that you inform a teacher or the Director if there is a change in plans for pickup. Anyone new who picks up your child will be required to sign a form with their name, relationship and date, but only after you have authorized this by a written message to a staff member. **WE WILL NOT RELEASE A CHILD UNTIL WE HAVE A WRITTEN CONFIRMATION FROM YOU.** For safety reasons, please do not take your child from the classroom or playground without the teacher's acknowledgment.

Confidentiality

It is the policy of Noah's Ark Preschool that employees, board members, therapists and educational consultants may not disclose, divulge or make accessible confidential information belonging to or obtained through affiliation with Noah's Ark Preschool. This information may only be shared with those who have legitimate need for such information and to whom Noah's Ark Preschool has authorized disclosure or parental consent. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Plan for Assessment of Child Progress

Our preschool program has a written plan for assessment that describes assessment purposes, procedures and uses of the results. Teachers, through observations, anecdotal records and communication with parents, identify children's interests and needs. The developmental progress is shared with parents at conferences held twice yearly (and more often when necessary), through daily conversations, and written communication. Each child's records are confidential.

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled in the fall and spring. Parents can meet with the teachers on an individual basis to discuss their child's interests, goals and developmental progress. Conferences can also be scheduled as needed throughout the school year. Please check your school calendar for scheduled conferences dates. This is an adult time and there will be no class scheduled that day.

Developmental Concerns

When a staff member or administrator suspects that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, this information is communicated to families in a sensitive, supportive and confidential manner. The parent is provided with documentation and explanation for the concern, suggested next steps, and information about resources for assessment.

Sick Child Policy

Consideration is the key factor. Coughs and runny noses can last "forever", but common sense tells us when a child would be more comfortable at home. We encourage sharing, but germs aren't included. If your child is sick with a cold, coughing, sneezing, fever (101° F, 38° C), excessive runny nose, sore throat, or uncontrolled diarrhea, please keep them home. Other reasons to remain home are for contagious infestations such as head lice, chicken pox, conjunctivitis, strep throat, impetigo, or tinea corpus.

If a teacher feels that a child is not well enough to be in school, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child. Please contact the school if your child is diagnosed with a contagious disease. Staff will not dispense medication without written parental consent on the Emergency Form.

Health Standards

All health and immunization forms must be current with a well-child visit within one year. The form needs to be signed and dated by the physician showing that the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations.

Hand Washing

In order to maintain a healthy environment and reduce the risk of transmitting infectious diseases, all children, staff and volunteers will wash their hands upon entering Noah's Ark Preschool classrooms.



No Smoking Policy

Noah's Ark Preschool is a smoke-free facility. The outdoor play area is also considered part of the facility in that no smoking is permitted in the presence of children.

Nutrition

Snack time is a great opportunity to quietly socialize while exploring different tastes. The children are responsible for snack preparation—passing out cups and placemats. The snack person for the day passes out the snack, with teacher assistance when needed. Each class has small water pitchers that the children take turns filling and then pouring their own drink during snack time. Children wash their hands before snack and must remain seated while eating.

Part of caring about our children is caring about what they eat or drink. Teachers and/or parents need to do their best to serve fruits, vegetables and foods low in sugar and fat and free of preservatives, artificial coloring and flavoring. Please be sure that your child's registration form contains all relevant information about any food allergies your child may have. NOAH'S ARK IS A PEANUT-FREE ENVIRONMENT! Because of severe allergies, we do not serve peanuts or any peanut products during snacks.

At the beginning of the year, parents will be asked to bring in a classroom snack from a list of allergy friendly food items. The snacks will be stored in our "Noah's Store" and will be used for the daily snack. On a child's birthday, parents may bring in juice boxes and/or special plates and napkins. The child will be able to select the classroom snack from "Noah's Store" and the class will sing "Happy Birthday" to the child. We always check with the child to see if he/she wants to have this special attention.

Clothing

Having an extra set of clothes at school is a good idea for many children who especially enjoy water play. Please remember to label all coats, backpacks, and sweaters. Wash & wear clothing is the best choice. We like to go outside, so, please remember jackets, gloves, and hats in cold weather. Tennis shoes are safest for school play.

School Closings

If Peters Twp. School District delays opening due to weather conditions, the morning sessions will meet from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon. Afternoon classes will begin at 1:00 PM and end at 3:00 PM. If Peters Twp. cancels school due to weather conditions, Noah's Ark will cancel both AM & PM classes. Tune to the cable school news channel or KDKA (1020 radio) and watch for the Peters Twp. or Noah's Ark listings.

Parent Involvement

Regular communication is encouraged among parents, caregivers, and the school staff. We offer parent orientation, scheduled parent coffees and conferences, regular newsletters, and frequent spontaneous interaction.



We are always looking for individuals who would love to share their time and talents with us. Reading a favorite story, sharing your hobby or career work, preparing a snack are just a few examples. **Please see our "Most Wanted" list.** Parents are welcome and encouraged to participate on the Noah's Ark Board of Directors or serve on committees that direct the preschool.

Parent Orientation is an evening session scheduled within the week that classes begin and includes introduction of staff, description of daily routines and policies, a question and answer period, and a tour of the classrooms.

Home Visitation is offered to each student the week before classes begin. This is a good opportunity for teachers, parents and children to get to know each other and make everyone more comfortable during the first sessions of school.

Shortened sessions are scheduled the first week of school. Half of the class will attend for the first hour and the other half of the class will attend the last hour of the session. A smaller group for a shorter period of time is more supportive for the younger child and provides more

individual attention and guidance during this transition time.

Parent Library of parenting books is located in the upstairs entrance hall. You may sign out a book, tape, or video for two weeks.

Field trips provide an excellent social experience for all of us. Several trips are scheduled during class time throughout the year. Some are on the calendar. Others, the teacher will plan as the year progresses and the children's interests are observed. The Fours and Fives will visit a local nursing facility during the school year. This is an excellent intergenerational celebration planned by teachers, parents, and event directors.

Parents or other caregivers must attend each trip and furnish transportation for their child. Admission fees are the responsibility of each family; these costs are not included in tuition. No refunds are given if you do not attend the field trip.

Parent Coffees: Twice a year parents are invited to attend a meeting with the director to discuss news and ask questions about our program. You will meet during your child's class time. It is a wonderful way to voice concerns, offer suggestions and meet other parents in your child's class.



Siblings can attend.

Fundraisers: Noah's Ark is supported by your tuition, Our Redeemer contributions and several yearly fundraisers. Tuition alone does not cover all operating expenses. Fundraisers provide money for "subject" teachers (Spanish, art, music), purchases for the playground and office equipment, special events ("Dessert with Someone Special" and the end-of-year picnic) and training workshops for our teachers. We limit our fundraisers to what you may otherwise buy and social events. We have Christmas and Easter Sarris candy sales, Kidstuff Coupon book sales, and a spring dinner-auction, which is our big event.

Service Projects: At times, we ask the children to participate in service projects. This may be baking cookies for Meals on Wheels, bringing in canned food for the Food Bank, collecting items for the Washington Women's Shelter, corresponding to an elderly person—a "pen pal", or saving their change to give to the Heifer Project—buying an animal for someone in a third-world country to begin a farm. If you have any suggestions, we welcome your comments. Children respond with enthusiasm and interest when they know that they are bringing a smile to someone else's face and truly helping.

Holiday Celebrations

Our motto for the holidays, in keeping with the needs of the children, is to keep it simple. The children create their own "masks" for Halloween, hear various stories and songs, but do not bring their costumes to preschool—unless they are visiting our friends at the adult care center. For Valentine's Day, they might choose to create a special card or letter for a friend or family member with various art materials. Our Christmas celebration is significant with birthday parties for Baby Jesus, planned by the classroom parents. We discourage candy being brought to preschool.



Grievance Procedure

Noah's Ark has an open door policy. If an issue comes up..

1. Discuss issue with child's teacher(s).
2. If discussion proves unsatisfactory, arrange a meeting or dialogue with the director. At the discretion of the director, a meeting could be called with the parents, director and the teacher.
3. If results remain unsatisfactory, the parent needs to discuss the situation with the president of the Board of Directors and/or the minister of Our Redeemer. Following this action, a meeting could be called that would include all parties involved—the parents, the teacher(s), the director and the president of the Board.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Admissions, the provisions of services and referrals shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age or sex. Program services shall be made accessible to eligible individuals with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to the provisions of aides or the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among the available methods and subject to available funds.

Any student and/or their guardian who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with any of the following:

Noah's Ark Preschool
105 Gateshead Drive
McMurray, PA 15317

Bureau of Civil Rights Compliance
Department of Public Welfare
Room 521 Health and Welfare Building
P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Office of Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Region III, P.O. Box 13716
Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
Executive House, Suite 300
101 South Second Street
P.O. Box 3145
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Bureau of Civil Rights Compliance
Department of Public Welfare
Western Field Office
Room 702 State Office Building
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

2011-12 Calendar

September

- 1,2 In-service Staff meetings
- 7 Parent Orientation, 7-8:30pm
(limited childcare provided)
- 6-8 Home Visitations
- 12 Abbreviated sessions begin
- 18 Noah's Staff Installation,
9am church service

October

- 3-6 Parent Coffees
- 18,19 Springhouse Pumpkin Patch
field trips
- 26,27 Country Meadows Halloween
celebration for 4's and 5's
(tentative dates)
- 26-28 i.simon photography

November

- 1-2 Parent/Teacher Conferences,
No School
- 9-10 Open House
- 23-28 Thanksgiving Break
- 29 Classes resume

December

- 10 Christmas Around the World
event, Sat., 10-12:30
- 14,15 Christmas Parties
(Happy Birthday Baby Jesus)
- 19-Jan.1 Christmas Break

January *Happy New Year!*

- 2 Classes resume
- 16 Martin Luther King Day,
No School
- 24-26 Parent Coffees
- 31 Registration for Fall, current
families & church members

February

- 14 Open Registration for Fall
Begins
- 20 President's Day,
No School

March

- 7-8 Parent Conferences,
No School
- 12, 13 Dessert with Someone
Special, 6:30-8:00pm
- 24 Dinner/Auction Fundraiser
(tentative date)

April

- 4-9 Easter Break
- 10 Preschool classes resume
- 18,19 Springhouse Dairy Farm field
trips, 9:30am -11:30
- 25 Summer Camp Registration
begins

May

- 8-10 Mother's Day Teas
- 16 Last Day of School
- 17 End-of-year picnic, Peterswood
Park, 10-12:30

June

- Summer Camp: 5-7, 12-14,
19-21, 9:30-12:00

NOAH'S ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS:

Easter Seals: "Diversity Awareness"

Verna McGinley: Environment &
Science activities

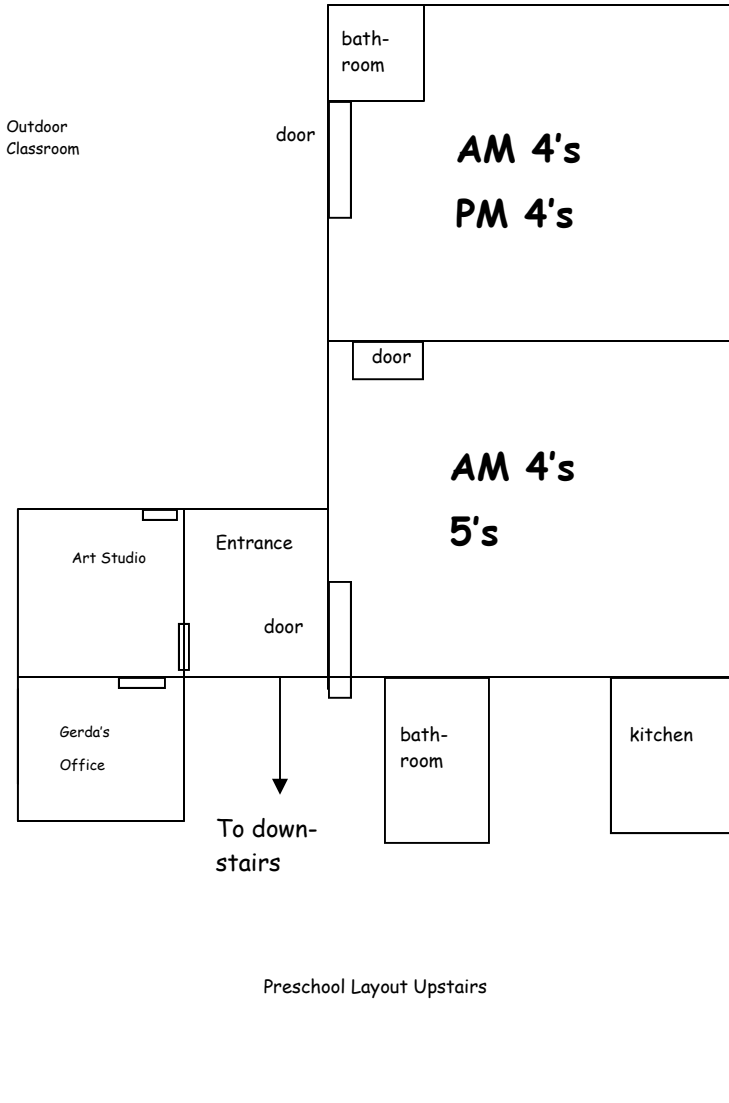
The Outdoor Classroom: Nature
activities (formerly REEC)

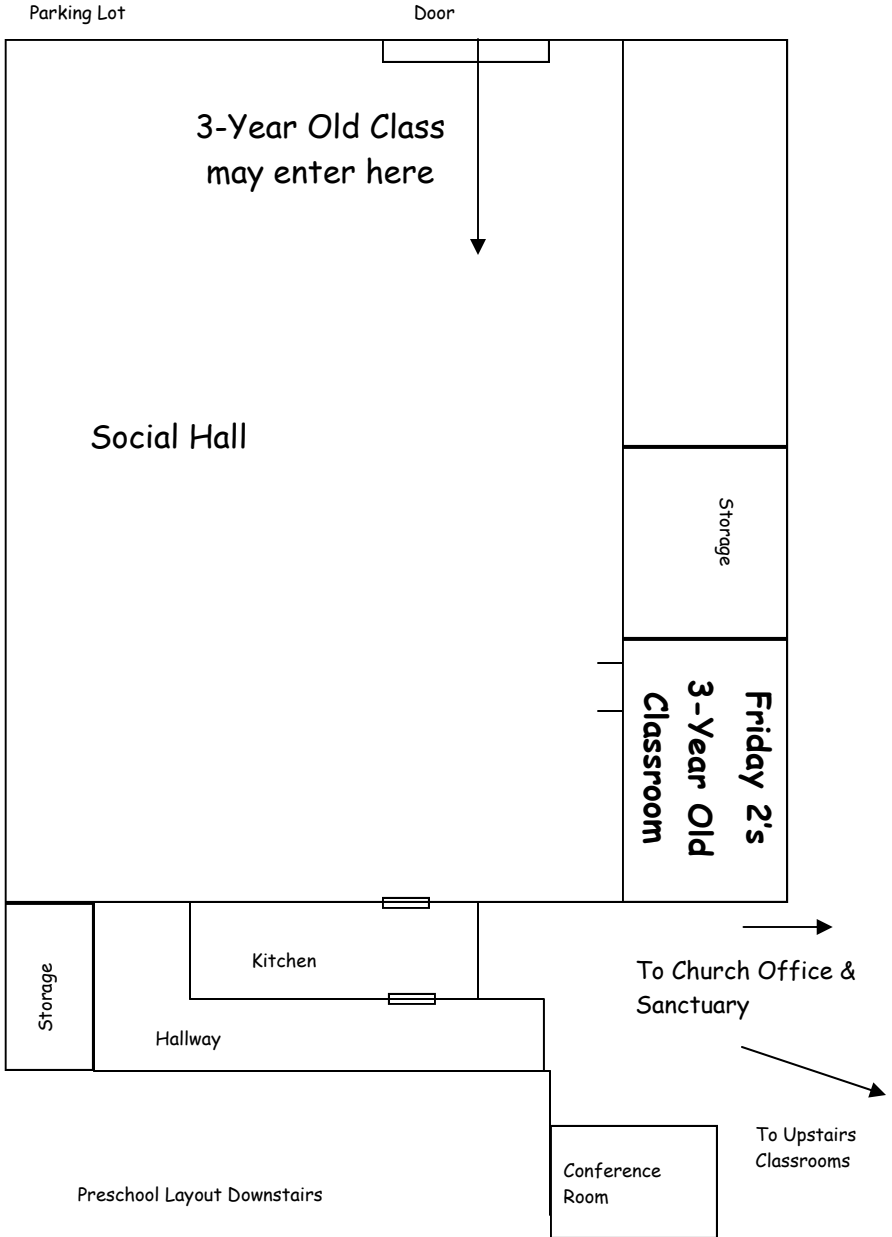
Community Helpers: paramedics, fire
dept., police

Intergenerational Program:
partnership with Country Meadows

Parents: Share your interests,
careers, and/or culture

Parking Lot







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