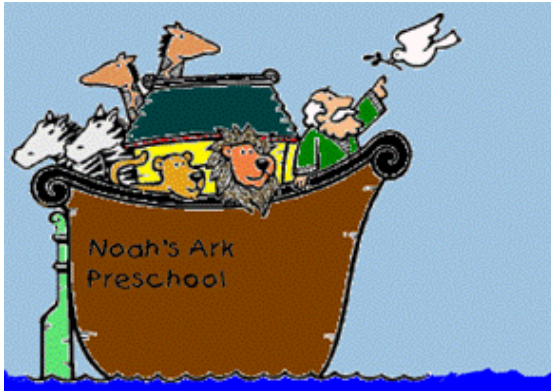


Noah's Ark Preschool

Parent Handbook

2009



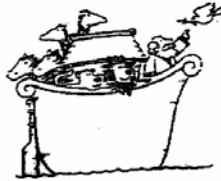
Welcome to

Noah's Ark Preschool

105 Gateshead Drive

McMurray, PA 15317

noahspreschool@comcast.net



20 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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Accreditation	5
History	5
Noah's Ark Mission Statement	5
Philosophy	6
Developmental Goals for Children	6
Child & Family Outcome Statement	7
Staff	7
Program	7
Enrollment	9
Operating Schedule	9
Friday Workshop & Noah's Café	10
Registration	10
Tuition, Refunds and Withdrawals	10
Security Precautions	11
Discipline	12
Suspected Child Abuse	12
Arrival & Pickup Times	12
Parent-teacher Conferences	13
Developmental Concerns	13

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sick Child Policy	14
Health Standards	14
Hand Washing	14
No Smoking Policy	14
Nutrition	14
Clothing	15
School Closings	15
Parent Involvement	16
• Parent Orientation	16
• Home Visitation	16
• Shortened Sessions	16
• Parent Library	16
• Field Trips	16
• Parent Coffees	16
• Fundraisers	17
• Service Projects	17
Holiday Celebrations	18
Grievance Procedure	18
Nondiscrimination Policy	18
Calendar	20
Maps	22-23

Accreditation

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

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 certified preschool (NAEYC) in 2006. We are planning and hoping to construct a unique natural playground in 2010. 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.



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. Self-esteem & independence—encouraging each child's uniqueness and responsibility for personal and property care.
2. Interaction & Cooperation—promoting social skills, conflict resolution and positive group interactions.
3. Discovery & Exploration—providing opportunities of growth in the following areas: questioning, observing and experimenting.
4. Communication—facilitating comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral language and progressing to written language.
5. Physical Capabilities—providing opportunities to develop small and large motor skills and coordination.
6. Creativity—cultivating expression of ideas and emotions through art, music, movement and drama.

7. Christian Education—providing opportunities for spiritual growth through Biblical stories and songs.
8. Family Involvement—working closely with families to promote the child's learning and well-being.

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.

Staff

Noah's Ark Preschool staff is made up of a full-time Director, Assistant Director, Financial Administrator, and ten qualified co-teachers committed to each child's total development. The staff also includes a Spanish 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

NAP offers the following types of enrollment for

Two Year Olds—suggested age is 2 by October 1st:

Mommy & Me, Friday mornings

Time for Tots, Friday mornings

Three Year Olds—suggested age is 3 by October 1st:

Tuesday & Thursday AM or PM

Monday & Wednesday AM

Four Year Olds—suggested age is 4 by October 1st:

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday AM or PM

Five Year Olds—suggested age is 5 by October 1st:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday AM

Lunch Bunch—all enrolled students are eligible.

Stay and Play—all enrolled students are eligible.

Friday Workshop—age 3 by October 1st to 5 years old

Summer Camp—ages 3-7

Noah's Café - ages 3-7

Operating Schedule

The preschool year is nine months, September through May. The yearly schedule is outlined on the calendar given to each parent. Class times are as follows:

Morning class 9:00 AM—11:30 AM

Afternoon class 12:30 PM—3:00 PM

Two's classes 9:30 AM—11:30 AM

FRI Workshop 9:30 AM—12:00 noon

Stay and Play 12:30 PM—2:00 PM

Lunch Bunch 11:30 AM—12:30 PM

Summer Camp 9:30 AM—12:00 noon

Noah's Café 6:00 PM—8:00 PM

Friday Workshop and Noah's Café

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.

Noah's Ark Café is offered one evening a month. Under the direction of adults, children prepare their own dinner and participate in activities after the meal. It gives the parent "an evening off".

Both of these programs are 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, 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 will be paid by May 15th for fall enrollment, or, when the registration form is submitted. The first month's tuition payment is refundable (less \$35 administrative fee) if the Director is notified in writing 30 days prior to the starting date of school.

Subsequent monthly tuition is due on the 15th of the previous month. The ninth and final payment for the school year is due April 15th. **A late fee of \$10.00 will be assessed to a payment after the 15th of each month.** There is the option of paying in full by September 15th or making two payments by September 15th and January 15th totaling the yearly tuition cost. There is a 10% 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. Checks should be made payable to **Noah's Ark Preschool** and mailed to 105 Gateshead Drive, McMurray, PA 15317, or placed in the tuition mailbox in the entrance of Noah's Ark.

Scholarships are made available through private contributions and fundraisers. Scholarships are awarded yearly. 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

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.

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.

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.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

A day is set aside in the fall in which parents can meet with the teacher on an individual basis to discuss their child's adjustment to preschool, share concerns, and ask questions. A second conference date is offered in late winter to discuss observations on set goals and kindergarten readiness, if applicable. 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.

We rotate parent's responsibility in providing snacks for their child's class. A monthly sign-up sheet is posted outside each classroom. Sweets should be reserved for birthdays, which are observed by having a snack and singing "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, Noah's Ark will start at 10:00 AM for morning sessions. AM classes will end at the usual time. Afternoon classes will begin and end at the usual time. 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, care-givers, 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 facil-

ity 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, 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, pizza sales, and the main event is the spring dinner-auction.



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

2009-10 Calendar

August

- 20 Professional Staff Development
CMU
- 31 Staff Seminar

September

- 1-4 Home Visitations
- 8 Staff Meeting and room preparations
- 9 Classes Begin (abbreviated schedule)
- 15 Tuition due for October
- 16 Parent Orientation Night, 7-8:30 PM

October

- 5-8 Parent Coffees
- 9 Noah's Café, 6-8:00 PM (Kids cook at preschool while parents have time out!)
- 14 Springhouse Pumpkin Patch field trip – 2's, 3's and Tots classes
- 15 Springhouse Pumpkin Patch field trip – 4's and 5's classes
- 15 Tuition due for November
- 27 10:30-11:30 AM 4's & 5's – Halloween celebration at Country Meadows
- 29 2:00 – 3:00 PM 4's – Halloween celebration at Country Meadows
- 28-30 i.simon Photography (Class and individual photos taken.)

November

- 3 Parent-Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL
- 10-11 Open House
- 13 Noah's Café – 6-8:00 PM
- 15 Tuition due for December
- 17 10:30-11:30 AM 4's & 5's visit Country Meadows
- 19-20 NAEYC Conference, Washington, D.C.
- 24 2:00-3:00 PM 4's visit Country Meadows
- 25-27 Thanksgiving Break – NO SCHOOL
- 30 Classes resume

December

- 11 Noah's Café – 6-8:00 PM
- 12 Christmas Around the World
- 15 Tuition due for January
- 15-17 Birthday Parties for Jesus
- 21-Jan 3rd Christmas Break – NO SCHOOL

January

- 4 Classes resume
- 8 Noah's Café – 6-8:00 PM
- 15 Tuition due for February
- 18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO SCHOOL
- 25-28 Parent Coffees

February

- 1-5 Fall Registration begins (in-house only)
- 12 Noah's Café – 6-8:00 PM
- 15 President's Day – NO SCHOOL – Parent Teacher Conferences
- 15 Tuition due for March
- 16 Fall Registration opens to the public

March

- 12 Noah's Café – 6-8:00 PM
- 15 Tuition due for April
- 20 Noah's Dinner Auction Fundraiser (tentative date)
- 23 Dessert with Someone Special
- 29-April 4 Easter Break – NO SCHOOL

April

- 5 Classes resume
- 6 Summer Camp Registration begins
- 9 Noah's Café – 6-8:00 PM
- 15 Tuition due for May

May

- 3-6 Mother's Day Teas
- 15 Tuition due for September 2010
- 19 End of the Year Picnic, Peterswood Park
- 20 Rain date for picnic

June

- 8-10 Summer Camp, Week 1
- 15-17 Summer Camp, Week 2
- 22-24 Summer Camp, Week 3
- 29-July 1 Summer Camp, Week 4

Enrichment Programs

Intergenerational Program: 4's & 5's have programs with Country Meadows residents on a monthly basis

Easter Seals "Diversity Awareness"

Verna McGinley - environment & science

Regional Environmental Center - nature activities

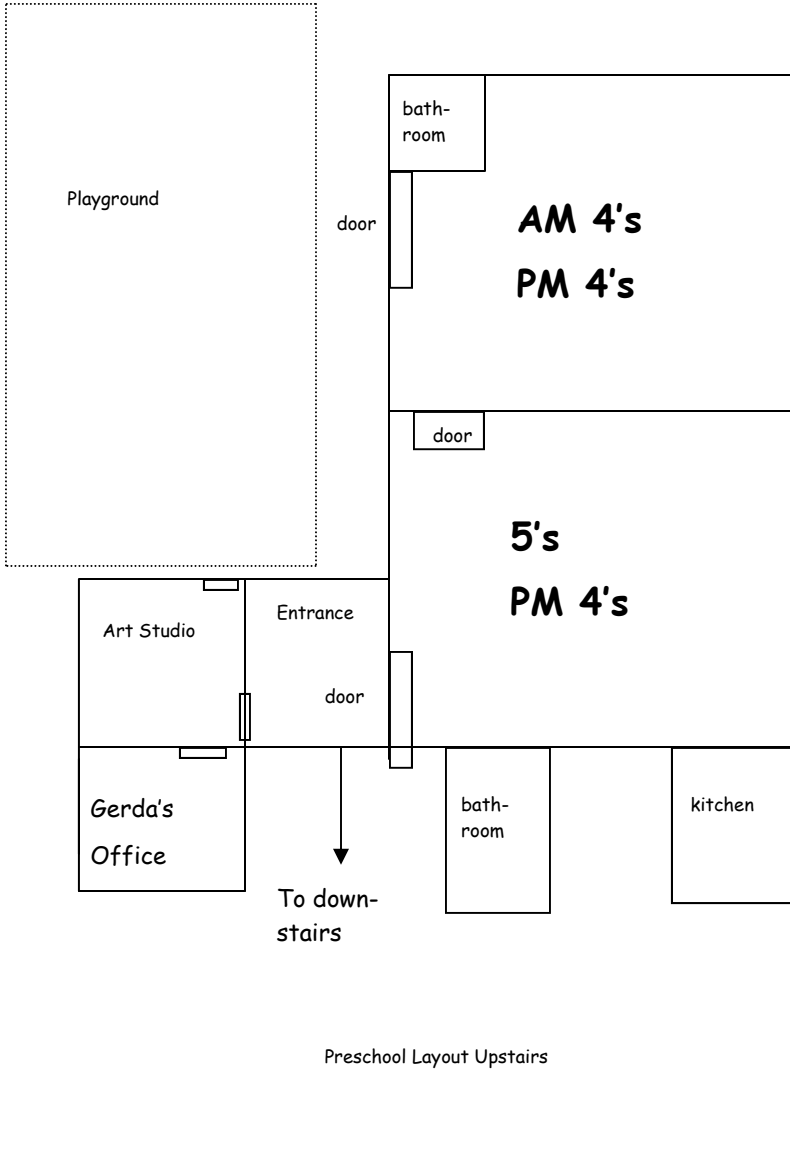
Canonsburg Hospital - "Wash Away Germs"

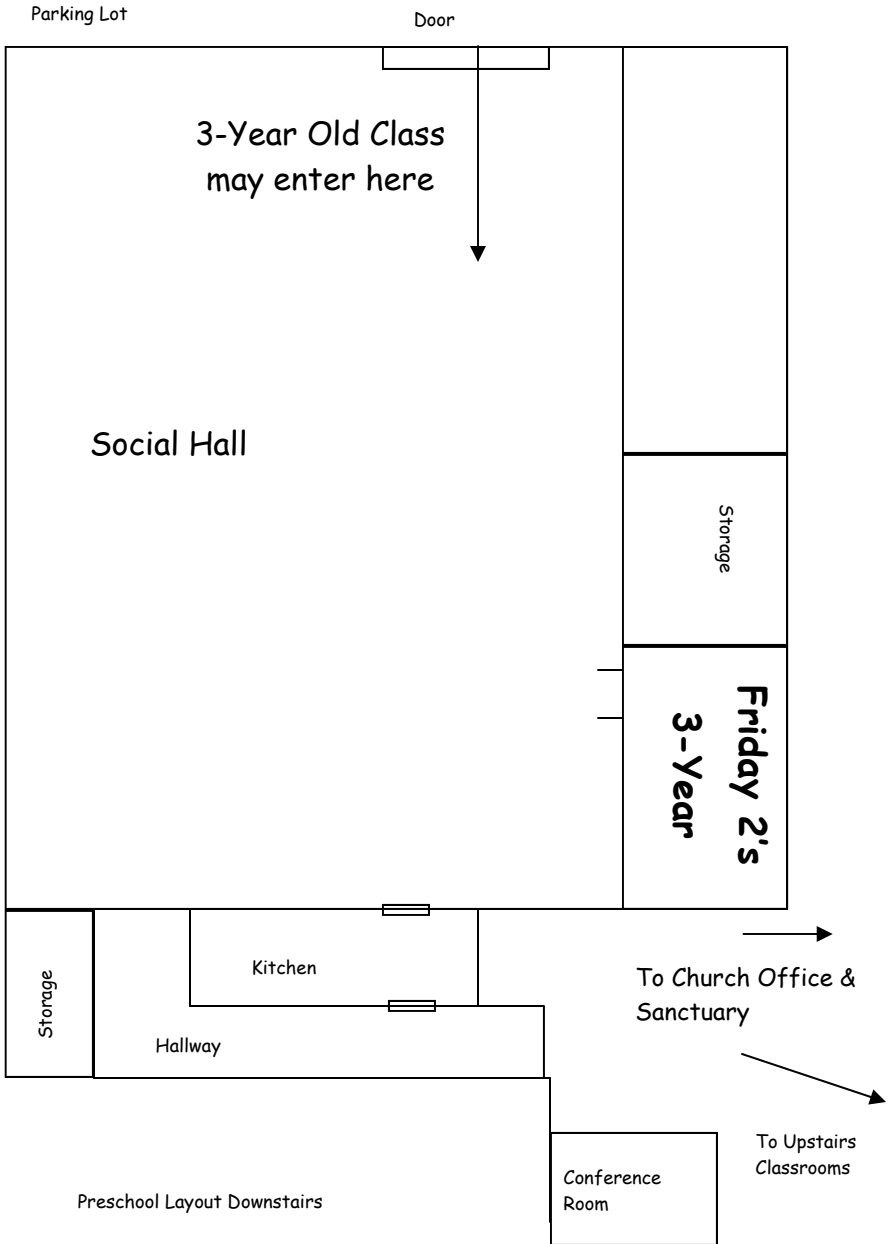
Community Helpers: paramedics, fire dept., police

Parents - share your interest, careers and/or cultures

Stretch and Grow - creative movement

Notes







Noah's Ark Preschool
105 Gateshead Drive
McMurray, PA 153175