



Children's Learning Center at First Christian Church
1345 Potomac Avenue Hagerstown, MD 21742

Policy Handbook for Parents

(September 2016)

Our Philosophy:

Northern Cross is an early learning center for three and four year old children. The program will provide the stepping stones for the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of preschool-aged children, equipping them for success in Kindergarten. All care will be administered in a nurturing environment. We believe children learn through play.

Our Mission:

Northern Cross is a program of the Christian Education Commission of First Christian Church. Our sister preschool was built by the church's DIA (Disciples in Action) team in the summer of 2007 in Zimbabwe. The name of their preschool is Southern Cross, hence the "A to Z" logo (America to Zimbabwe.) We will be exchanging fingerplays, music, books, art ideas and curriculum as well as photos and letters throughout the school year.

Our Credentials:

Northern Cross is a non-profit center and is licensed by the Office of Child Care branch of the Maryland State Department of Education. The entire staff has been fingerprinted for state and federal background checks. The facility has been examined and approved by the State Fire Marshall. Our Child Care Director and our Child Care Teachers have bachelor or master degrees and maintain their professional education with twelve to twenty-four clock hours of coursework per year as well as training in CPR and First Aid. The rest of our staff are licensed as Senior Staff and have completed community college courses in child care and maintain their professional education with twelve clock hours of coursework per year as well as training in CPR and First Aid. We have two staff members qualified by the MSDE to administer medication. We have an emergency preparedness plan coordinated with the MSDE Project Blanket. Our staff is participating in the voluntary program of the Maryland State Department of Education/Office of Child Care "Maryland Child Care Credential" which recognizes child care providers who go above and beyond the minimum state licensing requirements. We are also striving for accreditation by the Maryland State Department of Education which requires several years of self-assessment and continuing improvement.

Our Staff:

Director/Head Teacher for 4s: Beth Adams (beth@steffeyfindlay.com)
301-797-3114 (home)
301-733-1600 (afternoon)
301-992-2871 (cell)

***THIS IS THE CONTACT NUMBER FOR NON-EMERGENCY
PRESCHOOL QUESTIONS DURING THE PRESCHOOL DAY:
301-992-2871 (Beth's cell)***

***EMERGENCY NUMBER DURING THE PRESCHOOL DAY – TELL
THE CHURCH OFFICE STAFF THAT YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY:
301-733-0144 (First Christian Church, Dianna Snow, Administrative
Assistant)***

Teachers: Angela Sink (the5sinks@myactv.net)
301-302-7006
Crystal Hoch kchoch@comcast.net
797-597-1714
Pam Smith pamela.smith1015@gmail.com
240-675-5534
Julie O'Connor occonnorbj@myactv.net
240-520-8509

Substitutes: Nancy Watson gwatson66@aol.com
301-223- 8650
Sandra Coffman (ccoffman@myactv.net)
301-791-4963
Tina Duckworth (tinaterp65@verizon.net)
301-714-1043
Susan Seiler 301-733-9184

First Christian Church: 301-733-0144 (<http://www.fcchagerstown.org>)
FAX 301-733-0146
House A Cross the Way 301-797-9721

Emergency Contact: Phil Adams (phil@steffeyfindlay.com)
301-733-1601 (office)
301-992-2879 (cell)
301-797-3114 (home)

Our Class Offerings:

An Open House for registration for the school year 2017-2018 will be offered Sunday, January 8, 2017 from 2PM – 4PM at First Christian Church. At that time, a registration fee of \$35 (non-refundable) and the first month's tuition of \$160 (non-refundable) will be due to secure a placement for your child.

Children must be three years old or four years old by December 31st of their enrollment year and potty-trained. There are a limited number of two year old openings.

The classrooms will be divided by ages: two year old, three year old children and four year old children. Two classrooms at a ratio of not more than ten children to one adult will be in session three days a week (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday) from 9:00 AM until 11:30 AM.

Our Lunch Bunch Program:

An optional "Lunch Bunch" program will be available on most Mondays and Tuesdays when preschool is in session from 11:30 AM until 1:00 PM. We will begin on Monday, September 12. A sheet of five Lunch Bunch coupons is available for \$35 – a separate check for \$35 should be made payable to Northern Cross/First Christian Church and the sheet of coupons will be sent home in your child's bucket. The Lunch Bunch program is voluntary and requires the child to bring a lunch and a Lunch Bunch coupon secured to the ***outside of the lunch box*** each day of attendance. An envelope containing \$7 or a check for \$7 is permitted if you do not choose to purchase the sheet of coupons. "Lunch Bunch" is a social time of play, lunch and quiet teacher-directed activities which may include a short video.

According to Child Care Regulations from the MSDE, children may not have sugary drinks for lunch or snacks. Please pack accordingly. Also, if we have children with serious allergies to nuts, no peanut butter will be allowed at Northern Cross in any form. Please be aware of this in the sandwiches and sweets you pack.

Lunch Bunch will be supervised on Mondays and Tuesdays by Angie Sink, Crystal Hoch and Pam Smith. *Please remember to include a napkin, a utensil, if necessary, and a drink in the lunch box. The lunch box should be clearly labeled on the outside with your child's name.*

Our Schedule of Activities:

9:00 – 9:10 Greeting/Arrival

Children are greeted at the lower south portico door, directed through the hallway, store belongings, meet with “homeroom” teacher, converse, play with playdough, puzzles, table toys

9:10 – 9:15 Transition to Gathering

9:15 – 9:45 Gathering

Morning Exercises/Greet the Day/Story/Schedule

9:45 – 10:45 Activities (Individually and in Small Groups)

Miss Beth - Cognitive Development: pre-reading, listening, pre-math, measurement, cooking

Science: inquiry

Miss Angie - Creative Expression: the arts, speech development

Emotional and Character development: imaginative play

Miss Julie - Large Muscle Development: gross motor skills, balance, coordination, self-care tasks, games

Social Studies: recognizing physical characteristics, family structure, jobs, prop box play

Miss Pam- Block play

Social Studies :community awareness of rules, geography

Miss Crystal- Small Muscle Development: scissors, tactile, pre-writing skills, eye-hand coordination

10:50 -11:10 Clean-up and Transition to Snack/Snack in homerooms

11:10 – 11:25 Music and Large Muscle Play

Outdoor play every day that weather is agreeable

Inclement weather: Parachute, hoops, scarves, bean bags, balls

11:25 - 11:30 Dismissal

Our Bucket Brigade:

Children should arrive with a **large, sturdy** bucket. They can easily place artwork and notes into the bucket during the day as well as bring notes TO the teachers. All children should also carry a change of underpants, socks and slacks in the bottom of their bucket in a zip-loc bag in case of accidents. Remember to change the clothing to meet weather conditions. Children should never bring toys or other items from home in their buckets. Decorating the outside of the bucket will help the child with identification. Please remember to write your child's name with an upper case letter for the first letter and lower case letters thereafter to prepare them for the way they will see their name in Kindergarten.

Our Field Trips:

T-shirts with the Northern Cross logo are available from Beth Adams for \$10. Please make the check payable to Northern Cross or send cash! We really like to have the children wear the t-shirts on field trips as other children are often at the sites.

We will strive to make field trips family oriented so that all parents may attend with siblings. We will meet at the field trip site. Parents who are unable to attend with their child should make arrangements with another parent to chaperone their child.

Parents will pay for field trip, where required, before arrival at the site. Envelopes will be sent home prior to the field trip date.

We also welcome visitations by fire fighters, police officers, librarians, veterinarians, puppeteers, or anyone interested in visiting with us. Usually one should consider a fifteen minute visitation for the optimal learning experience for the children. Please talk with the Director concerning the best timing of your visit. It is usually best to visit in the winter or spring when the children are more able to listen for a longer period of time.

Our “Dress Code”:

Children are encouraged to play actively, create art masterpieces, explore in the sand and water tables, and enjoy the outdoors. Please make sure that your child is dressed in a comfortable manner to participate in these activities. Flip-flops, shoes without a back, or slippery shoes are a hindrance and should be avoided. We have planned to always have our messiest paint day on Thursdays so be sure to avoid wearing “best” clothes on that day! Although we attempt to cover clothing with smocks, paint has a way of finding that new outfit! Please put your child’s name on all outerwear!

Our Church Family:

First Christian Church welcomes everyone to worship with us. The Disciples of Christ denomination believes “no creed but Christ.” We are a family-friendly church with many programs for children of all ages including Sunday School, choirs, and youth groups. Parents can worship with the reassurance that their children are cared for by screened volunteers and qualified staff. Parenting classes and Bible study are also available. The church’s community involvement includes MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers), DIA (Disciples in Action), Angel Breakfast, Global Outreach, Bible School, Community Services and, of course, Northern Cross Children’s Learning Center. Visit the website at www.fcchagerstown.org to read our newsletter and hear our sermons.

Our Discipline Policy:

At Northern Cross, children are encouraged and expected to work and play with others respectfully. If a problem occurs, children are first given the opportunity to talk with each other. If teacher intervention is needed, the children will discuss the situation and try to resolve it with her assistance. As a final resort, the children may be asked to move from the conflict to a quiet area in the classroom. The children will be in the quiet area for no more than four minutes and then discuss appropriate behavior with the teacher.

At no time will the staff use physical punishment.

At no time will the staff use belittling comments.

If inappropriate behavior persists, the staff will conference with the parents to work toward a solution.

Behavior that presents a safety issue will not be tolerated and the child may be dismissed from the program.

Our Arrival Procedure – begins at 8:50 AM:

Many parents worry about their child crying. Our teachers have a lot of experience in redirecting children who are unsure. As soon as the day begins, the child will become involved and smile! It is best if you hug your child, say good-bye and leave happily. The Director will call you if your child does not calm down in a few minutes.

For the safety of the children, parents are encouraged to arrive by the south portico entrance and have their children met at the outside door by the teacher. ***Please refrain from speaking on your cell phone at this time.***

Parents should enter the parking lot at the southernmost entrance off Potomac Avenue and circle the entire parking lot until entering the portico facing east with the driver's side at the church door. A teacher will be at the portico door to assist your child in exiting the car. The child will be met by another teacher in the hallway and directed to the classroom by color group – blue, purple, green, yellow, or orange.

Parents who choose to accompany their child into the classroom should park in a designated parking space and be wary of oncoming traffic. Arrival time is not an appropriate time to inquire of your child's progress or converse with the teacher. Please use e-mail or the telephone for this purpose.

Northern Cross is not responsible for children until they have been greeted by the teacher at the south portico door. Children should NEVER play in the parking lot or front lawn while parents are conversing.

Our Dismissal Procedure from the Playground – 11:25 AM:

When informed of your child's homeroom "color," parents should ***make a large sign of that color for their car's windshield clearly and largely blazoned with your child's name. All designated drivers for your child should have a sign also.***

When the children are playing outdoors, parents should arrive in the same manner as the arrival procedure (off Potomac Avenue) and drive toward the playground. ***Please refrain from cell phone use at this time.*** Children who are in the blue or purple groups will be dismissed from the western side of the playground as the parents drive toward Country Club Road and turn left toward Hamilton Blvd. Please be aware of the large bush to your left when exiting. Children who are in the yellow or green groups will be dismissed from the north portico side of the playground as parents drive toward the Country Club Road and turn right toward Potomac Ave. In the case of siblings in two different groups, the older child should proceed to the younger child's dismissal area.

If you choose to watch your child on the playground, please park in the parking lot by the arrival door, walk in front of the church to watch and then queue in your car when dismissal time arrives. You may also temporarily park on Country Club Road. Teachers will dismiss children from the gate if parents choose, but please do not park in the car queue and impede the progression of the line of cars.

Our Dismissal Procedure During Inclement Weather:

If the children are not on the playground, the blue and purple groups will be dismissed from the north portico and the yellow and green groups from the south portico. In the case of siblings in two different color groups, the older child should proceed to the younger child's dismissal area. ***Please refrain from cell phone use at this time.***

Our Designated Drivers Policy:

Children may only be dismissed to a person designated on the emergency card unless written permission is given by the parent to the teacher. In case of emergency, a parent may send another person who must show a photo ID and carry a letter or a cell phone message to the staff. No child will be released without an authorization by phone or note.

Our Safety Procedures:

Our policies and procedures are carefully drafted and reevaluated to ensure your child's safety while under our care. Our building is locked securely and has alerts and key cards to let the Church personnel staff know who is entering and when there is an entry. We conduct regular emergency drills for fire, evacuation and severe weather. Our "House A Cross the Way" is our safe house. Phil Adams is designated as our emergency person who will be at the site within fifteen minutes. He has been fingerprinted by the Criminal Justice System's state and federal background checking system and confirmed by the MSDE Office of Child Care through a notarized permission form. In the case of an extreme emergency that would warrant removing children from the vicinity of the church, children will be transported to Steffey and Findlay, Inc. at 171 South Burhans Blvd. We will call all parents from this location should the need arise to move the children from First Christian Church.

Our Snow Day Policy:

Please listen to the radio (WHAG) or log onto the Washington County Board of Education web site to determine the status of snow delays or cancellations. If the public schools have a one hour OR A TWO HOUR delay, we will begin our day at 10 AM and end at 11:30 AM. If the public schools cancel the day, we will cancel our day. If the school calls for an early dismissal, please make every effort to come for your child immediately.

If we cancel more than six days of class, we will attempt to make up the days.

Our Health Forms Policy:

We are required by the Maryland State Department of Education to have all health forms in our facility before the first day of school. The forms are downloaded from the MDSE Office of Child Care website and are available on our website www.northerncrosspreschool.com. Additionally, forms specific to Northern Cross are available at this site. Please make sure all the forms are complete by perusing each line item of each form and filling in the line or by marking a N/A on the line. If your child has an allergy, please make a special note to the Director and we will post the allergy as required.

Our Snack Procedure:

Northern Cross will provide snacks according to the MSDE regulations: one serving of a whole grain, one serving of a fruit or vegetable and a glass of water. A snack fee of \$50 is requested with October's tuition (due the first preschool day). We welcome donations of snacks to offset the expense and will inform you of children's allergy restrictions, if necessary. Some snacks will be prepared by the children to coincide with the curriculum. In the case of children with allergies, I will inform parents of the ingredients before the cooking experiment.

Birthdays will be celebrated by honoring the Queen or King of the Day. Parents are welcome to provide a celebratory snack for their classroom or the whole school if they wish. Please inform Miss Pam of your intention at least a week in advance. Cakes of any kind are discouraged; brownies, ice cream cups, yogurt, pudding, cookies or bite-sized muffins are more suitable and not as messy. ***Please provide a list of the ingredients of homemade snacks so that we may discern if children with allergies may eat the snack or need to provide their own.***

Parents of children with allergies or food restrictions are required to provide a few celebratory snacks to keep on hand in the preschool so that those children can still feel special at these birthday celebrations. Please give Miss Pam these "emergency" snacks on the first day of preschool.

A special note: WE CANNOT SERVE ANY PEANUT PRODUCTS AT NORTHERN CROSS!!!

Our Expectations:

To prepare your child for preschool, we hope that he or she will be encouraged to be independent as often as possible, to be responsible for toys and belongings and to listen and respond to the initial inquiry of an adult. When choosing shoes, coats, hats and mittens, try to find ones that a child can manage. Write your child's name properly with an uppercase letter for only the first letter of the name. We will work together to achieve these goals.

Our Conference Procedure:

The staff of Northern Cross does not feel that impersonal checklists or numerical or letter grading of children is the best method of communication for the preschool child. We prefer that you talk with us about your child through e-mail or telephone.

As teachers plan their activities, they focus on a skill and keep notes on the children's progress. A copy of the skills we hope to master is located on the bulletin board in the blue classroom. As recommended by the Maryland State Department of Education, we will be using the Work Sampling System for assessing the skills the children should master. Please note that this is not our only focus throughout the day, but just a guideline for us to assure your child is ready for Kindergarten.

Whereas it is not possible to talk with parents at the beginning of the day or "at the fence" at the end of the day, please do not hesitate to talk with us. If there is a concern, send a note or e-mail or phone us and we will return your inquiry immediately. That which seems minor to an adult may be upsetting to a child. All our teachers are concerned about the well-being of our children!

Our Visitation Procedure:

We will have many opportunities for you to see your child with his or her classmates: field trips, special activity days, and party days. However, we discourage parents from visiting the classrooms due to the safety of the children as anyone who regularly visits must have a state and federal background check SPECIFIC TO NORTHERN CROSS according to our licensing facility, the Office of Child Care.

First Christian Church's Program Facilitator, Cindy Reeder, is considering some class offerings for parents in the church: scrapbooking, exercising, Bible study and parenting classes. This would be an excellent opportunity for you to peek in and see what is happening in your child's world.

I periodically send e-mails concerning your child's preschool day so that you can communicate with your child. In addition, the teachers prepare a monthly newsletter at the end of each month.

Our Opportunities for Parental Involvement:

We would like parents to become involved! Please e-mail the director if you would like to be a member of these committees:

- Field Trip Organizers – plan the day with the staff, arrange with the site, arrange carpools, arrange snack, collect money at the site
- Party Planners – coordinate the Halloween or Easter celebrations
- Graduation Gurus – order the graduation caps, coordinate the set-up and clean-up of Fellowship Hall, order and transport the cake and paperware for the picnic
- Good Neighbors Program – canvas the surrounding establishments to give discounts to the Northern Cross parents including the YMCA, retail stores, Little Gym, restaurants
- Fundraising Fanatics – request donations from organizations for books, supplies, toys, and operating expenses for Northern Cross (does not need approval from the church if asking outside the church)
- plan a fundraiser (must be approved through the church's Stewardship and Finance Commission prior to implementing and all profits must be designated for Northern Cross)

Our Sick Child Procedure:

If your child becomes ill at school, the child will be isolated from the other children with a staff member observing until the parent comes for the child.

If your child has a fever or has vomited within twenty-four hours, please keep your child at home.

If your child has a communicable illness, please inform the Director immediately. An e-mail will be sent to all the parents, but no child will be named to the other parents.

If your child has lice, please inform the Director immediately. An e-mail will be sent to all the parents, but no child will be named for privacy.

Prescription medicine should be administered by the parent prior to coming to the center.

Prescription medicine for emergency situations must be in the original container labeled with the child's first and last name, a current date, dosage and directions, and physician's name. A parent is required to fill out and sign a current medication authorization form which grants our staff permission to administer medications. The center will not administer medication after the expiration date.

Our Tuition Payment Procedure:

All checks should be payable to Northern Cross – First Christian Church. You may put the check in the bucket and we will retrieve it.

Yearly tuition is divided into nine monthly payments.

The registration fee and tuition for September was paid with your enrollment form at the Open House.

Tuition and snack fee is due on the first preschool day of September for October. Remaining tuitions are due the first preschool day of October for November, etc. ending with a payment on the first preschool day of April for May. There is no payment in May.

If you have an inquiry concerning your account, please contact the Director. Since all account information is confidential, your child's teacher will not be able to answer any billing questions.

A late fee of \$25 will be charged on any account a week in arrears unless prior arrangements have been made in writing with the Director.

A returned check fee of \$25 will be charged on any check return for insufficient funds. After two returned checks, tuition must be paid with cash or a money order payment.

Please be prompt when picking up your child. After two instances of a child not picked up at closing time, a fee of \$1.00 per minute per child will be charged. This fee must be paid in cash to the staff member present before leaving Northern Cross.

If your child is withdrawing from Northern Cross, please inform the Director at least two weeks in advance. Monthly tuition payments are non-refundable.

Northern Cross Schedule 2016-2017

- Thursday, September 8 – Orientation Parent and Child Day,
staggered ½ hour increments
color groups sent last week of August
Yellow and Green groups - 9:30 – 10:00
Purple and Blue groups – 10:30 – 11:00
- Monday, September 12 – Preschool, regular schedule, 9 – 11:30
Children begin without parents
- Monday, September 12 and Tuesday, September 13 – Lunch Bunch begins
Children bring own lunch, parents pick up at 1 PM
(\$7 per day, may purchase a sheet of 5 coupons for \$35)
- Thursday, October 6 – Field trip hiking to Renfrew, ***fee \$4 9-11:30***
Renfrew-led program: (Purple/blue class at 9:15, Green/Yellow class at 10:30) Parent must transport own child, siblings welcome
- Thursday, October 27 – Individual and class photos by
Unforgettable Photography, Lori Anderson in SANCTUARY
- Monday, October 31 – ***Halloween Party by parents in classrooms***
- Monday, November 7 and Tuesday, November 8 – NO SCHOOL
- November – Vision Testing TBA – Lion’s Club
- Tuesday, November 22–***Pow-wow for parents*** - 11 AM, Fellowship Hall
We will still have Lunch Bunch
- Thursday, November 24 – NO SCHOOL
- Monday, December 19 – Christmas Celebration by teachers
- Tuesday, December 20 through Tuesday, January 3 – NO SCHOOL
- Thursday, January 5 – Return to Preschool
- Sunday, January 8– Open House 2 – 4 – new students**
- Monday, January 16 and Tuesday, January 17 – NO SCHOOL
- Thursday, January 26 –Chinese Year of Rooster party by teachers, ***wear red***
- FEBRUARY – Fire Safety TBA - blue classroom and outdoors if possible
- Tuesday, February 14 – Valentine Party by teachers
- Monday, February 20 – NO SCHOOL
- Thursday, March 16 – St. Patrick’s Day Party by teachers, ***wear green***
- Thursday, April 6 – Easter Party by teachers in classrooms and
Easter Egg Hunt by parents outdoors at 11 AM
- Monday, April 10 through Tuesday, Monday, April 17 – NO SCHOOL
- Tuesday, April 18 – Return to preschool
- Thursday, April 20 – Alien Day celebration by teachers
- Thursday, May 4 – Field Trip to Bowling Alley fee ***tbd***
- Monday, May 8 – Cinco de Mayo Fiesta by teachers
- Thursday, May 11–Graduation (10 AM)&picnic at Pangborn Park until 1 PM