

ST. THOMAS' PRESCHOOL

P. O. Box 247

Fort Washington, PA 19034

215-233-2923

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HANDBOOK

*"Whose child is this?" I asked one day
Seeing a little one out at play
"Mine", said the parent with a tender smile
"Mine, to keep for a very long while
To wash his hands and to comb his hair
To tell him what he has to wear
To prepare him so he may always be good
And each day to do the things he should"*

*Whose child is this?" I asked again
As the door opened and someone came in
"Mine", said the teacher with the same tender smile
"Mine, to keep for a little while
To teach him how to be gentle and kind
To train and direct his dear little mind
To help him live by every rule
To get the best he can from school."*

*"Whose child is this?" I asked once more
Just as the little one entered the door
"Ours" said the parent and the teacher as they smiled
And each took the hand of the little child
"Ours to love and train together
Ours this blessed task forever."
(Author Unknown)*

ST. THOMAS' PRESCHOOL

PROGRAMS

St. Thomas' Preschool is a vibrant, loving and nurturing community that serves children ages 2 through 5 years old and includes three Pre-K classrooms. The regular school day is 9am to noon. We offer early drop off at 8:00 a.m. and extended day options between noon and 3pm.

At STP, we'll prepare your child for their transition to kindergarten. Each child will develop readiness skills through directed play and playful learning and will experience our Wonder-Based curriculum in the classroom and on our fabulous 43 acre campus with its open fields, walking trails, climbing trees, gazebo, and nature playscape. Complete information about the preschool is available on our website www.stthomaspreschoolpa.com along with Facebook and Instagram!

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Thomas' Preschool nurtures the potential growth of each child by providing a creative and inclusive environment rooted in wonder, joy and belonging.

Relationship between Church and School

The School shall function as an extension of the Church in support of its mission, subject to the approval of the Vestry of the Church. Control and legal responsibility for its operation shall rest with the Rector, Church Wardens and Vestry, collectively referred to herein as "the Vestry".

School Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of St. Thomas' Preschool, herein referred to as "the Board", is a governing body of the School and focuses on the long-range and strategic needs of the School. The members of the Board of Trustees are nominated by the Board and approved by the Rector and the Vestry. The Board is charged with presenting a clear statement of the School's mission, vision and strategic goals to the Rector and the Vestry for approval. Additionally, the Board engages proactively to support and provide guidance to the Director in the management of the School.

Membership of the Board shall consist of not less than ten persons and not more than fifteen persons. All members, with the exception of ex-officio members shall be selected by the Governance committee of the Board, and elected by the Board with the approval of the Vestry. Membership shall be designated as follows:

- a.) The Rector (or his/her appointee) will serve ex-officio as a voting member of the Board.
- b.) One P.O.S.T (Parents of St. Thomas') representative will Serve ex-officio as a voting member of the Board.
- c.) The Director of the School, Church Business Administrator And Vestry Liaison shall serve ex-officio as non-voting members of the Board.
- d.) The remaining voting members shall be a combination of active St. Thomas' parishioners and non-parishioners familiar with the School.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Children between the ages of 2 and 5 may be eligible for enrollment. There are no admissions tests administered. **Children must have the developmental maturity to manage the anxiety of separating from their parents.**

Admission Decisions

Current St. Thomas Preschool families are given the opportunity to re-enroll their children January to establish the number of spaces we have available to accept new children into our programs. Our Church members and previous families get priority after our current families re-enroll. February 1 we will make the first round of admission decisions.

Priority Guidelines

As a family school and ministry of St. Thomas' Church Whitemarsh, we have a strong interest in and make every effort to enroll all siblings from a family and children of parishioners if we have the appropriate

program openings. Therefore, acceptance decisions are made offering positions to our applicants using the following priority guidelines:

1. Current students and their Siblings of St Thomas Preschool students
2. Children of Parishioners and Staff Members.
3. Previous St Thomas' Preschool families
4. All other applicants to balance our program if space is available. If there is not space available your child will be placed on our waiting list and contacted when and if a spot opens.

Enrollment is ongoing throughout the year, as long as space is available.

Enrollment decisions are discussed per child as a team. We discuss the child's social and emotional development, academic needs/strengths, and birthdate cutoffs to make the best decision for your child. The Director has final discretion after reviewing with the team and taking all requirements into consideration, along with what is best for the child.

Receipt of the application, registration fee and first month tuition(both non-refundable) will hold your child's spot. A written confirmation will be sent by the Director to confirm their spot.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

St. Thomas' Preschool accepts children irrespective of race, creed, religion, and national origin. A diverse environment enriches the learning experience for children by providing exposure to unique cultures and backgrounds.

A parent, who believes they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint of discrimination with any of the following:

Department of Public Welfare
Bureau of Equal Opportunity
Room 223, Health and Welfare Bldg
PO Box 2675
Harrisburg, PA 17105

U S Dept of Health and Human Services
Office for Civil Rights
Suite 372, Public Ledger Bldg.
150 South Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111

SECURITY

The Preschool is equipped with security doors which keep unwanted visitors out of the classroom area. **These doors will be kept closed at all times except during arrival and dismissal. Early arrival families should ring the doorbell in the morning. The doors will be opened at 8:55 each morning for regular arrival families.** If you arrive after 9:15 or prior to 11:55, please ring the doorbell and one of the staff members will open the door for you.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills are held monthly and scheduled to include all classes. All children and staff must evacuate the building using the posted evacuation plans.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

The following plan will be implemented in the event of an emergency

Shelter in Place

1. Shelter of children in case of an emergency in classroom and away from the windows.

The locations of shelter in place in your classroom are designated per classroom and displayed in each classroom.

Evacuation Plan

2. Evacuate children away from the facility. Location at Haas Hall (in the side entrance of the church building at the top of the upper parking lot).

Method of Contact

3. Parents will be notified, via telephone that an emergency has arisen.
4. Parents notified, via telephone that an emergency has ended, and where to pick children up.

ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Accident insurance for all students and staff members is provided by St. Thomas' Church in cases where injury occurs on church property during regular school hours.

FINANCIAL POLICY

The registration fee and the first month's tuition are **non-refundable** and **required** of all **current** and **new** families at the time the child is enrolled in the program.

The monthly tuition beginning in October is due the first school day of each month. Tuition Express is our method of payment. It is available to sign up for automatic withdraw from your checking account (no fee) or through your credit card (2% fee). Please see Anita Totten.

If your child will not be attending St. Thomas' Preschool for any reason, you must submit a letter to the director no later than June 1st.

Activities & Supplies Fee for all classes: \$55/yr. per child

- Activity fee goes towards the many child/family events we do throughout the school year i.e. Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Crafts, May Day Teas, SuperHero Night and End of year Picnic and other events we provide for our families. This will be billed with our first month tuition through Tuition Express.

Scholarship money is available for families in need of assistance. Please contact the Director.

St Thomas Preschool Board

Board	Shari Petrakis, Director	In general as described by the by-laws the board is the governing body of the school and focuses on the long-range and strategic needs of the school. The board is actively engaged in supporting the operations of the school and providing guidance to the director in the management of the school. We also act as liaisons between the school and church and as representatives of the school in the greater community.
President	Brenda Bott	The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the School Board. He or she shall attend the Executive Committee and act as an ex-officio member of all committees. He or

		she shall assist in oversight of the mission, governance, policies, management and finances of the School and perform such other duties as may from time to time be assigned to him or her by the Board or the Executive Committee. A parishioner is preferred but not required. The term is for two years.
Vice-chair	Kesley Helman	A long term commitment - 1-2 years as vice, followed by 1-2 years as chair; preferably a parishioner although this isn't a requirement; general skills in organization and business management & oversight helpful; a passion for STNS
Treasurer	Joe Kenney	Background in finance/accounting; help with annual budgeting and support monthly reporting; work with church finance liaison to the school
Public Relations	TBD	Photo/computer skills helpful; responsible for supporting advertising & communications regarding school; update brochures, flyers as needed; support website as needed/able; help with open house events, etc; work directly with director & parish communications coordinator;
Outreach/Service Coordinator	TBD	Works with Beth and other volunteers to continue development of our new outreach initiative at STNS
At Large	Kelly Culley Amy Roak	Parishioner; attend both children's commission meetings (responsible for church school, youth group, etc at St. Thomas' church) & STNS board meetings to promote community and communication between the groups
POST	Patty Greenfield	The role of P.O.S.T. is to raise money for the school, support the Director, teachers, and staff and help sustain special events important to school life.
Facebook Page Administrator	Beth Gustafson	Oversees the management of our informational Facebook page
Secretary	Kim Morris,	This position is available to assist the Board in areas of need. They attend monthly meetings and support

		the mission of the school.
Vestry Liason	Charles Horton	Liaison between the church and school.

COMMUNICATION

- Communication is important to the success and enjoyment of all the opportunities that St Thomas' offers. Communication outlets are:
 - Parent Communication Wall - dry erase board calendar with two months worth of events posted.
 - Email Newsletter (monthly)
 - Mailboxes/Cubbies outside your child's classroom – check daily
 - Class representative/Room Parent
 - Director – Shari always has an open door
 - Board president
 - Facebook page
 - St Thomas Preschool website → <http://stthomaspreschoolpa.com>

GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES

- **Special events/holidays.** No Food items given to children for special events/holidays i.e. Halloween, Valentine's Day, Easter etc. If you want to give a gift to each child in your class please make sure it is a non-food item i.e. stickers, pencils, tattoos etc.
- **“Special days”:** 1) provide a healthy snack 2) bring in a book 3) show-n- tell item → should be around the theme of the class; on your child's “special day” a “special person” (mom, dad, grandparent, neighbor, etc) is invited to read the book to the class.
- **Sick Children** – call school 215-233-2923 anytime from 8:30am on and let teacher who answers know what child/classroom you are calling out sick from
- **Snow Days** - we follow Colonial school district – if they are closed St. Thomas preschool is also closed. An email also goes

out to entire school if school closed. If there is a delay we will inform by email also.

- IMPORTANT DATES/POST EVENTS

Halloween Parade	Approximately 9:15am for 1 hour	Students come to school in their costumes (no masks please) and the children parade outside in our parking lot. Parents are invited to watch and encouraged to help change children out of their costumes after the parade.
Thanksgiving Feast	Volunteers and Room mom's only	The children gather together in the auditorium to share seasonal songs and/or poems. They enjoy a feast of chicken nuggets, muffins and fruit. <u>This event is only for the children.</u>
Christmas craft Workshop	9am-1 hour long	Parents join their children to create special Christmas crafts and enjoy Christmas treats baked by the children in cooking class. Please watch your child's classroom bulletin board and calendar for the day you are to attend. Not recommended for siblings.
Christmas Pageant	11am – 1 hour long	A very special event! All families and extended families join us in the auditorium to watch the 3's, 4's and 5's perform a retelling of the Christmas story. Bring your video cameras!
Family Fun Night	6-8pm	POST presents this awesome event! An event for the entire family! Crafts and/or activities related to the night's theme keep

		everyone busy.
"Super Hero Night	6-8pm	A chance for a special person to have some one-on-one time with their children. The evening includes crafts, an art show of the children's work and refreshments.
May Day Tea	1 hour in classroom	A lovely time to share tea sandwiches and delicious treats prepared by the children. Each child's special companion is invited to be pampered by their little host/hostess.
Pre-K graduation	11:00- 1 hour long	A wonderful event where the graduates receive diplomas, get recognized and sing ST Thomas songs.
Family Picnic	10am-noon	Bring your entire family and meet up at the barn for a morning of fun and games. Students, parents and teachers and extended family members gather for a cookout to celebrate the end of the school year.

- PARENT COFFEES – POST and room moms will have monthly coffees offered to parents after drop off. Watch for information.

- VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
 - Background checks required
 - Physical
 - Mandated Reporter

Media Permission:

Throughout the year staff may be taking pictures of the children attending school events of the Preschool or during classroom activities for marketing purposes for the church and school, for social media(Facebook and Instagram) and print material. If you are not willing to allow your daughter/son's photo to be used for promotion of the preschool please let the Director know at the beginning of the school year.

CHURCH: The School shall function as an extension of the Church in support of its mission, subject to the approval of the Vestry of the Church. Control and legal responsibility for its operation shall rest with the Rector, Church Wardens and Vestry, collectively referred to herein as "the Vestry".

Curriculum:

At St Thomas Preschool we believe in children learning through play. Through nature exploration and experiences that spark curiosity, wonder and imagination. These experiences begin in the classroom but extend onto our beautiful nature playground. The children delight in a nature walk on their way to our nature playground. They enjoy digging and searching for creepy crawlers, collecting and building imaginary settings, planting seeds and observing their growth, painting with natural materials, playing in the fairy garden and more. Please see our teaching philosophy and what Pre-K students learn on our website at www.stthomaspreschoolpa.com

EARLY ARRIVAL

Early Drop-off is available daily:

- Early drop off is available at 8:00 a.m. to all children in 2 year old classrooms through Pre-K classrooms and will be offered in our Orange Tiger's classroom.

Afternoon Explorers

The children are required to bring their own lunch and drink. Afternoon Pickup at our main entrance off the lower parking lot. All other doors are locked for safety.

**** Peanut free table is available. If your child has allergies alert the teacher.** See Allergy protocol on page 15.

PICK-UP POLICY

We realize emergencies do happen; therefore, it is imperative that you call the school at 215-233-2923 as soon as you know you may be late. A parent arriving late consistently will lose the privilege of using the extended hours program.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

The parking lot is often crowded at the beginning and end of the school day. Please use extreme care when entering or leaving the building and the parking lot.

- ◆ **2-year-old parents please use the upper parking lot, so that the lower parking lot does not get overcrowded at drop off and pick up.**
- ◆ **Drive slowly and carefully on Church property. The speed limit is 5 mph on church property.**
- ◆ **Hold your child's hand while traversing the parking lot – do not let your child run ahead of you.**
- ◆ **Remain alert at all times.**
- ◆ **Do not leave children unattended in your car.**

To ensure your child's safety, it is required that all children be brought to the classroom and picked up from the classroom. The teacher must be aware of the child's presence before the parent or carpool driver leaves.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

St. Thomas' Preschool will send an all school email as soon as we know if there is a school closing or delay. It will also be posted on Facebook and

Our policy is to open the school as long as traveling to and from school is safe, the facilities are running safely and accurately, and we do not anticipate problems with dismissal. **Please, whenever the weather is questionable, check your email.**

SICK CHILDREN (Please read very carefully)

Every effort is made to keep the children healthy. **Your child is not allowed to attend school if he/she has any of the following symptoms:**

- ◆ A temperature of more than 99 degrees in the last 24 hours (**child MUST be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school without fever reducing medication**)
- ◆ Green or yellow nasal discharge
- ◆ Intestinal disturbance accompanied by diarrhea or vomiting
- ◆ Any undiagnosed rash on cheeks, arms, legs, chest, or back
- ◆ Persistent cough
- ◆ Sore or discharging eyes or ears
- ◆ Complaints of a sore or irritated throat
- ◆ Child must have NO vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school

THE SCHOOL RESERVES THE RIGHT TO SEND HOME A CHILD EXHIBITING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS.

We have a zero tolerance policy for sick children.

If a child develops any of these symptoms while at school, he/she will be isolated from the other children.

Parents will be called and **must** take the child home as soon as possible. **Please be diligent in keeping your child home if there are any questions about his/her health.**

If your child has been exposed to any contagious disease, such as whooping cough, German or regular measles, mumps, chicken pox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, walking pneumonia or strep, it should be reported to the staff as soon as possible.

FOOD

Children with any food allergy are required to provide their own snack each day.

The school provides snacks of water and crackers/pretzels. Parents are encouraged to bring special snacks on their child's special day. Some healthy snack suggestions are grapes or other seasonal fruit, cheese and crackers, mini-bagels with cream cheese, assorted vegetables with dip, graham crackers, pretzels (hard and soft), yogurt, jello and pudding. Special snacks, such as cupcakes, brownies and ice cream are allowed for birthdays or other special celebrations, please advise your child's teacher when bringing this type of snack.

Please be mindful of known food allergies when providing a snack for the entire class.

Food Allergies:

Any child with a food allergy requiring Benadryl, Epi-pen or any medication, must have a written permission from the parent giving any staff member permission to administer the medication as well as written instructions from the child's physician. We follow CDC guidelines for our allergy protocol.

The Parent must alert staff and fill out allergy protocol paperwork (please see Teacher or Director). The child is **not allowed** to attend school without an updated Epi-pen/medication and the allergy protocol form completed. The Epi-Pen and medication must be in the original prescribed box by a physician. It is the Parent's responsibility to know when their child's Epi-Pen or medication expires. They must provide a new one once the Epi-Pen or medication expires.

Parents are required to bring in an appropriate snack for their child to have during snack time.

If a classroom has a child with a Peanut Allergy, that classroom will strive to become a "Peanut Free" classroom. Any child bringing in a lunch or snack with Peanuts, will sit at a separate "Peanut allowed" table.

During Special Events:

Please do not give food items as gifts to children, only non-food items are permitted to be given as gifts. i.e. pencils, stickers, tattoos etc.

MEDICAL RECORDS

The medical record form given to you is to be filled out by you and your family doctor and returned to us before your child enters the program. Please be sure that all immunizations are up-to-date.

MEDICATION

St. Thomas' Preschool staff will not administer medication, with the exception of medications for severe allergies.

All medicines must be labeled with child's name and will be kept in the red medical alert bag in each classroom. All medicines must have a current prescription attached.

Children with asthma needing an inhaler, must have written permission from the parent for any staff member to administer the medication as well as written instructions from the child's physician along with completing an allergy protocol form.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In case of a medical emergency, a staff member will call 911 and parents will be notified immediately. If contact cannot be made with the parents, we will call the back-up person listed on the emergency contact form.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Teachers will set appropriate and consistent limits, model acceptable behavior, redirect children, reinforce positively, and teach negotiating and problem solving skills. Children will be encouraged to use words to settle their disputes. A time-out will occasionally be used to give a child the space to re-establish his/her emotional equilibrium and composure. If necessary, a child will be removed from the classroom and taken to the Director's office if he/she is not responding to any of the other techniques or the safety of the other children is threatened by a child's behavior.

Spanking, hitting or shaming children, withholding food, or coercion of any kind is never permitted.

BEHAVIOR ISSUES

At any time the Director, with support of the Board and Vestry, can ask a child to leave St. Thomas' Preschool due to behavior issues.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

St. Thomas' Preschool complies with the Child Protective Service Act 124 enacted in 1976. The purpose of this Act is to protect children from abuse, to ensure their opportunity for healthy growth and development and, whenever possible, to preserve and stabilize family life. Our staff has been trained to identify signs of possible abuse or neglect. When we see those signs, we are required to report suspected abuse or neglect via telephone to Childline, which is followed up within 48 hours by a written report (CY-47) to the Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth. We cooperate with the Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth not only because it is required, but also because we understand that caring for children is a shared responsibility. We are committed to the safety and well being of each child. We solicit the cooperation of all parents in this endeavor.

SCHOOL SCHEDULE

StChildren should not arrive before 8:55 a.m. unless they have registered for the early drop-off option on the monthly contract for extended hours.

Daily schedules for classes are posted in individual classrooms.

Each class has a daily scheduled playground time.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Children will only be released to their parents or persons designated by the parents in writing as having permission to pick up a child. Parents may designate, on forms provided, a person who may pick-up their child or may send a note with the child. In either case, the person's driver's license may be checked to verify their identity. The safety of the child will always be foremost when releasing children to authorized persons. Please let us know if there is a special circumstance of which we need to be aware.

LATE ARRIVAL OF PARENTS

Parents are expected to bring and pick up their children **PROMPTLY** at the appointed time. Should a parent know in advance that he/she cannot be on time, another person should be designated in writing to pick up the child. In an emergency, a phone call will suffice.

Please contact the school office (215-233-2923) if you are going to be late.

CLOTHING

Because accidents happen, we ask that you provide an extra set of clothes to be kept in the child's cubby. Please include outer clothes, underwear and socks, which are labeled with the child's name and placed in a plastic bag. We also ask that the clothing be kept seasonal.

SPECIAL ITEMS

Children are encouraged to bring personal articles to share with the class with the approval of the teacher. Books, records, tapes or nature's treasures are usually a safe choice. **Only on your child's special day should an item from home be brought into school. We do not allow children to bring toy guns or toy weapons to school.** While we exercise care with children's possessions, accidents can happen. We ask that you do not send items of sentimental or monetary value.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

The teachers are eager to keep parents informed concerning their child's development and growth. Some examples of teacher communication include:

- ◆ Monthly calendars
- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Individual updates,
- ◆ Conferences upon request
- ◆ Notices posted outside the classroom on the bulletin boards and through email.

The following are some suggestions of ways that parents can help facilitate communication as well:

- ◆ **Please read carefully** the notes, emails and newsletters that come home periodically.
- ◆ If you have a concern about your child's development, please ask for a conference **immediately**. Teachers are happy to discuss your child's growth and progress.
- ◆ Please ask questions and voice concerns promptly. Teachers would prefer that you schedule an appointment when there is time and privacy to talk as needed.
- ◆ **Please do not talk about your child in front of him/her**. Children are sensitive about being discussed as if they are not there.

