

# Second Presbyterian Preschool

## Newsletter

August 2020



I feel like we are in our final lap and heading toward the finish line that will be the start of our wonderful school year. Like many other educators, August is my Go-Time! We now have only four weeks left before we are open five days per week, to all students on Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>.

We have lots of books waiting to be read and looked through. Many new toys are waiting to be played with. The curriculum is revitalized, and exciting lessons are ready to be taught.

The classroom floors have been scrubbed, waxed, and buffed. The carpet and rugs have been cleaned and sanitized. CPR/AED/First Aid training for teachers is scheduled for their workdays. Teacher uniforms, masks, and gloves have been ordered. Cleaning supplies are stocked.

We are **READY** for your children to walk through our doors. The teachers and I are excited to see them and to hear their gurgles and giggles. Kids just make us happy.

Providing a Christian, loving, nurturing, and safe environment where they can play, grow, and explore is our only goal.

I apologize in advance for the long length of this newsletter. Lots of important information to share this month. Our plan has benefitted from elements and wording gathered from other private school plans for reopening.

## Our Success Depends on You

The success of our school opening and keeping staff and students safe requires that everyone in the preschool community follows safe practices both inside and outside of school hours. Please wear masks, socially distance, do not congregate in indoor spaces, and, if possible, do not travel to areas with high COVID positivity rates.

Unless there is a substantial elevation in cases and positivity rates in metro Roanoke or in the preschool, I believe we can make it through the school year. We anticipate operating on the published preschool calendar. However, you should be aware that we may be forced to make changes in response to changing virus conditions. For example, it is unlikely that the following New Preschool Events will be held: Back to School BBQ, Preschool Sunday, Spaghetti Dinner, STEAM Night, and the Art Show. We are looking into possibilities of how to hold these events safely under tents outside and limiting the number of people attending at the same time. Hope prevails!

### Masks

**All preschool staff will wear face masks when on the preschool premises both inside and outside.** We plan to use clear face masks that allow children to see our mouths. Infants, toddlers, and preschool children rely heavily on seeing their teachers' mouths when learning sounds and words and connecting emotions to facial expressions. Because the clear masks allow children to see more of their teachers' faces, we hope that the children will be less anxious or worried seeing their teachers wearing masks. Teachers may also choose to wear face shields for part or all of the school day.

Children that are three and four years old are **ENCOURAGED, NOT REQUIRED, to wear a mask if they can wear it safely.** Safely means they do not touch, move, or otherwise play with their mask. Safely also means they know how to use the ear loops to remove and replace their mask after eating snack or lunch. If a child can wear a mask safely but forgets to bring it with them to school, we will have children's masks available. Please help your child to remember to bring their face mask to school. **Children aged two and under are not permitted to wear masks.**

We recognize that very young children may struggle with wearing a mask for the whole time they are with us. Teachers will build in time outdoors when students can be without masks. Children will also not wear their masks while taking a nap.

## Spacing

Fortunately, our preschool class sizes this school year fall well within the COVID19 guidelines set by the Virginia Department of Social Services for children ages 12 weeks through 5 years. We are also blessed with spacious, well ventilated classrooms. While it is almost impossible to keep very young children 6 feet apart, we are making changes to how our classrooms are laid out and to our preschool instructional practices to help keep children separated.

Examples of some of these changes include creating separated learning centers/spaces in the classroom and on the playground, spreading children out for “circle time”, seating kids apart during snack and lunch times, and teaching them to use their “airplane arms” to maintain a safe distance from their classmates.

## Air Quality

In case you missed the message I sent last week via HiMama explaining the air handling system at Second Presbyterian Church, I will share that information again here. A recent Canadian study included recommendations for re-opening its economy. One of these recommendations was to increase air intake on building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to increase ventilation. According to their research, the best way to improve indoor air quality is to improve ventilation by providing additional clean, outside air to your space. They recommend adding a heat recovery ventilator (HRV) or energy-recovery ventilator (ERV) to not only supply clean, fresh air, but also to recover energy from the exhaust air.

Second Presbyterian Church’s HVAC system includes Energy Recovery Ventilation (ERV) which is integrated with its air-handling units (AHUs). It was installed in 2014 and is serviced regularly by our contracted HVAC provider (Varney) and our maintenance staff. The ERVs purpose is (1) to provide outdoor air ventilation and (2) to reduce the energy use and system capacity required to condition that outdoor air to comfort conditions.

The ERV system is housed in a room on the roof of the church and sits directly above the Second Presbyterian Preschool classrooms. It pumps fresh outdoor air continuously through the preschool and church 24 hours a day. What a relief to know that the church is ALREADY ventilating our preschool classrooms with fresh, filtered outdoor air!

## Hand Washing

Proper and frequent handwashing is one of the main ways to prevent the spread of the virus. Our staff and preschool children will wash their hands upon entering the classroom, after using the bathroom, before and after snack and lunch, after being on the playground, before leaving for the

day, and any other times deemed necessary by the classroom teacher. Happily, our teachers have lots of creative ways to make handwashing fun and enjoyable.

Hand sanitizer is not recommended for use in preschool settings and is not permitted.

## Disinfecting Classrooms and Playground

We have a variety of measures in place to keep the preschool clean and reduce the spread of germs to keep our staff and students safe. Throughout the day teachers will be disinfecting classroom and bathroom surfaces. Every afternoon teachers will disinfect toys by dumping them into a bucket of bleach solution for a minute, carefully rinsing them in water, and leaving them to air dry overnight on clean towels. Toys that cannot be immersed in water will be sprayed with a disinfectant.

Playground and gym equipment and toys will be wiped with a bleach solution between classes. Each evening classroom floors will be sanitized, and classroom carpets and rugs will be vacuumed. Every three months the carpets will be deep cleaned and sanitized.

In addition to this rigorous cleaning routine, we have hired Go Green Cleaning to clean the entire preschool three times each week.

## Staff Uniforms

The Director, Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Builder's Workshop and Music Teachers will all be wearing uniforms this year! We are wearing uniforms solely at school to protect students and so that staff will be able to limit germs they may bring home to their families. Every day teachers will remove their uniforms before they leave. Part of the staff uniform is a smock. Teachers in the Infant and Ones classrooms will be wearing long sleeved smocks that they can remove as needed and replace with a clean smock. Teachers in the other classrooms will be wearing Cobbler's smocks that can be easily removed as needed.

Staff will also be wearing "school shoes" which are shoes they will only wear when they are at the preschool to limit the spread of germs into their cars or homes. Teachers in the Infant and Ones classrooms will have a pair of "classroom shoes" they will only wear in their classroom to prevent tracking germs into those rooms where children spend much of their day playing and crawling on the floor.

## New Process for Student Drop Off and Pick Up

Our preschool sits within a truly lovely and extraordinary church. Our spacious classrooms with attached bathrooms are unparalleled in the church preschool community. I am reminded daily of the thoughtfulness of the church members and architect who designed our preschool.

In addition to our remarkable classrooms and gymnasium, the church has more than 16 EXTERIOR DOORS! The CDC and DSS guidelines for re-opening schools recommend that groups of students enter and exit the building separately. This limits the co-mingling of student groups and the spread of the virus. Please see the table below and refer to the church map indicating the designated doors for each classroom. You can find this map in the new Family Handbook.

Guidelines also indicate that parents and caregivers should not enter the building during drop off or pick up. Parents should wear masks from the time they exit their vehicle until they re-enter their vehicle. We ask that parents help us by making this transition quick and painless. Children tend to do better if their goodbye includes a hug, a kiss, and a phrase to let them know you will be back soon.

## Temperature Taking and Wellness Questions

Upon arrival at school, all staff and students will have their temperature taken with a touchless thermometer. Staff and students with temperatures of 100.4 or higher will be sent home. They may return when they have been fever-free for a full 48 hours, have been cleared by a doctor to return to school, or present a negative COVID test result.

All staff and parents of students will answer a few health questions during morning check in.

### Drop Off (8:00 and 9:00)

All children will be dropped off at their designated classroom door. They will be greeted by their teacher who will take their temperature and ask the parent a few Covid19 specific health questions. Children's temperatures must be below 100.4 to enter the building. The teacher will record each child's temperature and check them in using HiMama. If you have more than one child at the preschool, please drop off your older child first.

### **Pick Up (12:00 and 1:00)**

All children will be picked up at their designated classroom door. The classroom teacher will check your student out in HiMama. We ask that you help us keep the pick up process moving swiftly. If you have any questions or information for your child's teacher, please send them a message in HiMama! Please pick up your older child first.

### **Pick Up (2:00 and 5:30)**

Ones and Infants will be picked up at their designated doors. I am still working on the pick up details for Enrichments and pick up at 5:30 for the Young Twos, Twos+, Three, and Fours.

## **New Process for Snack and Lunch**

To limit the spread of germs during snack and lunch times, this year all students will bring an individual snack (and lunch if participating in Lunch Bunch) and their own water in a non-leaking sippy cup or preschooler sized water bottle.

Teachers in the Twos, Threes and Fours classes will immediately begin working with their students to teach them how to get their snack/lunch from their cubby, bring it to where they will be eating, open their snack and drink, enjoy them, dispose of their trash, place their snack container and their sippy cup or water bottle back in their bag/lunch box and return it to their cubby.

## **Onset of COVID Signs or Symptoms During the Preschool Day**

If a staff member develops a fever, or signs or symptoms of the virus while at the preschool they will leave the premises as quickly as possible. Parents of a feverish, or otherwise symptomatic child, will be contacted by the Director and must pick up their child immediately. The student will be isolated and remain in the care of the Director until a parent arrives.

## **If a Staff Member or Student Tests Positive for COVID**

It is unlikely that we will make it through the school year without at least one person testing positive for COVID. When a staff member or student tests positive and is symptomatic, that teacher or student will be sent home to quarantine for 10 days from when the first symptom occurred until 48 hours after being symptom-free. Asymptomatic students who are found positive through testing, will be required to quarantine for 14 days. Asymptomatic staff who are positive will also be required to quarantine for 14 days.

Also, siblings of the student who tests positive, and the entire class of the student or teacher who tests positive will be sent home to quarantine for 14 days.

As soon as the Director has verified a positive case, families of the affected class will be notified immediately and asked to pick up their children as quickly as possible. The Director will also inform the entire school community that there has been a positive case and which classroom was affected.

Note: Periods of time required for quarantine are subject to change as we learn more about the virus.

## Ever Changing Recommendations

News about the pandemic continues to change rapidly and we continue to receive new guidance from state and federal agencies on best practices for re-opening schools.

The School Re-Opening Task Force continues to meet weekly to discuss new information and research that allows us to improve and refine the plan. Please contact me with your ideas and additional information and I will share it with the Task Force.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lengthy newsletter. You can always reach me at [sally@spres.org](mailto:sally@spres.org), the preschool office (540) 342-6405 ext. 1, or on my cell phone (757)535-4484.

Please enjoy the rest of August. See you in September!

Faithfully,

Sally I'Anson