

# PARENT HANDBOOK

## GETHSEMANE EARLY LEARNING CENTER



Those who are planted in the house of  
the Lord will come up tall and strong in  
His gardens. Psalms 92:13

Where academic excellence and faith formation  
walk hand in hand.

## ***MUTUAL COMMITMENT***

Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) actively seeks preschool students whose families desire to partner together to provide a strong foundation for learning grounded in God's love for each child. GELC strives to provide a preschool where character development, learning and faith formation walk hand-in-hand. We are committed to raising generations of children who are equipped in mind, body and spirit to be servants of Christ in the world. We look forward to partnering with you to nurture and support your child's faith formation and academic success.

### ***Preschool Staff***

Susan Boll, director  
Theresa Dupont, assistant director  
Patti Hagerman, teacher  
Scott Revoir, K-8 principal

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# ***GETHSEMANE EARLY LEARNING CENTER***

CLASS TIMES 7:00-8:45am (Before Care) 8:45 am – 11:30 am (Morning Session)  
11:30 pm - 3:00 pm (Busy Bees) 3:00 - 5:30pm (After Care)

## ***WELCOME***

Welcome to Gethsemane Early Learning Center! Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) is offered to congregation members and to the community as an outreach and mission ministry of the Gethsemane Lutheran Faith Community. It is part of Gethsemane's comprehensive education program, preschool through eighth grade. Our programs are dedicated to the instruction of your child as a whole-mind, body and soul. Our programs provide for interactions while helping to lay a strong foundation for spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, and physical development of your child. Classrooms are bright and cheery, and are a clean and safe environment where your child can grow and mature. Your child will experience a Christian atmosphere in the care of dedicated, skilled and nurturing staff committed to sharing the love of Jesus with your child and your family. This handbook is designed to give your family an overview of the philosophy, structure and procedures of Gethsemane Early Learning Center.

Because your family is your child's primary source of education, we want to be a partner in the process of helping your child grow and mature. We want your family to feel valued here at Gethsemane Early Learning Center and we welcome the opportunity to get to know your child and your family as we share the next few months together. We are gra

teful that we can offer a quality Christian preschool experience to our families.

Gethsemane Early Learning Center uses age-level appropriate educational methods and materials, including Second Step and the Creative Curriculum for 3-5 year olds (published by Teaching Strategies, Inc.).

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Gethsemane Lutheran School and Early Learning Center is to partner with families to provide a Christian education where academic excellence and faith formation walk hand in

hand. We celebrate all students as children of God, nurturing their development in mind, body, heart and spirit to equip them as servants of Christ in the world.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Gethsemane has a strong tradition of educating children in this community for over 70 years. We have a calling and responsibility to educate the whole child. We believe in allowing children opportunities to independently discover, create, explore, and problem solve. Classrooms are designed with a focus on Christian learning and interest centers, which include fine motor activities, art, music, language arts, math, science, large muscle, and hands-on-learning. This design enables students to discover and grow as they are encouraged and challenged to become life-long learners.

We believe in focusing on a child's spiritual relationship with Christ. We believe every child has God-given talents to discover. We seek to help each child grow to be uniquely themselves so that they may use their gifts in service to the world to God's glory.

## **GOAL**

The goal of Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) is to provide stimulating learning experiences by incorporating multi-sensory learning opportunities appropriate to each child's growing skills, which encourage intellectual, language, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual growth.

## **PROGRAM PLAN**

The Child Care Program Plan has been developed by, and is evaluated in writing annually by a teacher-qualified staff person. The Child Care Program Plan is available for review by parents on request.

### **The goals and objectives of Gethsemane Early Learning Center are:**

1. To encourage your child's intellectual development by:
  - Providing interesting centers including science/discovery materials, puzzles, sequencing materials, sorting, classifying and counting materials.
  - Making available books, both fiction and non-fiction, materials to retell stories and to make their own stories and books.
  - Providing play centers that encourage your child to learn about the environment outside the classroom.
  - Taking field trips.

2. To foster your child's physical development by:

- Providing materials and opportunities for small motor development such as puzzles, manipulative toys, art supplies, etc.
- Providing materials and opportunities for large muscle development such as balls, balance beam, jump ropes, group games, parachute, bean bags, etc.
- Promoting your child's self-sufficiency in dressing him/herself.

3. To promote your child's social development by:

- Providing activities which encourage your child to share with and assist others,
- Offering opportunities for your child to communicate with classmates, such as circle time, snack time, play time, etc.
- Allowing your child to be as independent as possible, such as putting on his/her coat, cleaning up spills, washing and drying hands to foster feelings of competence.
- Providing activities which expand your child's attention span and encourage understanding of group dynamics, such as listening to stories and waiting for his/her turn to talk.
- Encouraging cooperation and interaction through small group activities.
- Making play centers and appropriate materials available to encourage problem solving, cooperation and creative play.

4. To enhance your child's emotional development by:

- Planning and providing age-appropriate activities that challenge and develop feelings of competence and self-confidence.
- Using praise and positive reinforcement strategies.
- Handling discipline needs in a kind manner, ensuring your child of his/her worth.
- Celebrating your child's unique personality by providing opportunities for show and tell and birthday observances.

5. To enhance your child's spiritual development by:

- Including a time of Christian emphasis and reflection time using songs, Bible stories, and active role play of loving and forgiving behavior,
- Teaching children about their relationship with God and other people,
- Integrating Christian education into all learning areas.

The daily schedule at Gethsemane Early Learning Center will include:

- Welcome/check in
- Circle time
- Centers (art, science, math, cognitive games, dramatic play, sensory, etc)

- Snack
- Large muscle (gym or outside)
- Dismissal

Gethsemane Early Learning Center recognizes that the development of the whole child requires exploration across a wide range of learning activities. Thematic units allow the young child to experience and organize those activities in an interdisciplinary approach. Creative Curriculum, Second Step, and Handwriting Without Tears all serve as the guiding curriculum for the program.

The following are provided to meet those needs:

Cognitive Development	Bean Bags
Large Muscle Development	Slides
Imaginative Play	Outside Play
Science Exploration	Dramatic Play
Puzzles	Stories
Books	Show and Tell
Manipulatives	Puppets
Computer	Flannel Stories
Patterning Blocks	Art Center
Sequencing Games	Musical Instruments
Blocks	Sensory Play
Gym Time	Discovery Center
Balls	Daily Living Center
Dancing	Weather Station
	Calendar

## **LICENSE**

Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) is a licensed preschool program. This assures families that high standards have been met regarding space, equipment, program, and staff as outlined in the Minnesota Department of Human Services Division of Licensing Regulations Rule #3. GELC three, four and five-year-old classrooms are licensed for twenty preschool children. A 10:1 child/adult ratio will be met at all times. Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) is a non-profit service organization of Gethsemane Lutheran Faith Community. Originally named Gethsemane Lutheran Preschool, Gethsemane Early Learning Center was founded in September, 1974.

## **STAFF**

Gethsemane Early Learning Center staff are employed by Gethsemane Lutheran Church and School. This non-profit program is under the governance of the Gethsemane Lutheran School Board and Gethsemane Lutheran Church Council. GELC has DHS qualified Teachers



who are assisted by qualified Assistant Teachers. Teachers are part of the school staff and are overseen by the School Board.

## **ADMISSION**

Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) admits students of any race, sex, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, and tuition assistance programs. Students must be 33 months of age and fully potty trained to enroll in, and attend class. Once enrolled, it is assumed that your child is registered for the full school year, September – May, unless an unexpected emergency occurs such as illness, or a move from the community. A **two-week** written notice is needed if withdrawal from preschool is necessary.

**REGISTRATION FEE:** Enrollment is completed on-line through TADS. When applying to enroll your child in GELC, a non-refundable, yearly registration fee of \$100.00 per family is to be submitted along with the registration application. Note: Alternate Early Registration Fees and separate TADS handling fee(s) apply.

**TUITION PAYMENTS:** You will select your method and date(s) of payment when enrolling on TADS. We ask that you stay current with your tuition payments and contact the Director or School Office if/when alternate tuition arrangements are necessary.

### **TUITION POLICY:**

- Checks or money orders are made payable to Gethsemane
- There are no tuition reductions for holidays, illness, inclement weather or other absences.
- Tuition must be current for your child to continue to attend.
- Unpaid tuition balances will be turned over to a collection agency.
- There will be a \$25 fee for all returned checks.

If your family should have an unusual, or emergency financial problem that may affect prompt payment of tuition, please call or speak to the Director. It is your responsibility to communicate directly with the school if you're having difficulties with tuition payments.

## **INFORMATION NEEDED BY THE PRESCHOOL**

The following forms are needed to complete your child's file. This information is necessary to be in compliance with the Department of Human Services and State Department of Health. ALL

FORMS MUST BE FILLED OUT ENTIRELY AND IN YOUR CHILD'S FILE PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD ATTENDING HIS/HER FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. A STUDENT CANNOT BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND SCHOOL UNLESS HIS/HER FILE IS COMPLETE. The following forms are required:

1. Registration Form
2. Emergency Form
3. Health Form, must be signed by your child's doctor/medical provider
4. Immunization Form
5. Permissions Form
6. Family Information

## **SNACKS AND LUNCH**

▪ **SNACK:** Snack is provided daily for 1/2 day programs and includes a choice of milk or water. Snacks will include items such as cereal, crackers, fruit, vegetables, pretzels, yogurt, cheese, etc. A snack schedule is sent home monthly. There is no lunch served for a.m. or p.m. only classes. Lunch is only served for those enrolled in our Busy Bees program.

▪ **LUNCH:** Children staying for Busy Bees either bring a cold/bag lunch from home or order a hot lunch from the school's hot lunch program (for a fee or free/reduced; based on completed and submitted form). Federal regulations require that each child's lunch consist of items from the four food groups and meets the USDA's CACFP food guidelines. If a child's lunch is lacking an item, GELC will supplement the entire meal with a school hot lunch, assess the hot lunch fee, and notify you.

▪ **BIRTHDAY PARTIES/GIFT/TREATS:** Special activities are provided in the classroom to honor your child's birthday. Children do not exchange birthday presents, and party invitations must not be distributed at school unless all children in a class receive an invitation. Parents may bring "special treats" for all students in your child's class. State policy does not allow home made items to be served, therefore, any treats provided must be store bought. Please notify your child's teacher in advance if you are planning to bring birthday treats to be sure there are enough for each child, and to ensure safety from allergens (i.e. Wheat, soy, peanuts, etc.). Those having summer birthdays will have a celebration scheduled sometime during the school year. Your teacher will notify you in advance.

# SCHOOL CALENDAR/HOLIDAYS/SCHOOL CLOSURES

Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) is an integral ministry and outreach of Gethsemane Lutheran Faith Community. GELC will primarily follow the same calendar as the K-8<sup>th</sup> graders and will observe Christian holidays. GELC will be closed during major school breaks and will have some class days that differ from the K-8 program schedule. Please check the calendar and read all emails and notifications sent by the school.

## Preschool Calendar 2022-2023

The school calendar is also located on our website: [www.geth.org](http://www.geth.org)

\*All large group gatherings are tentative. Decisions on these events will be made using guidelines from the CDC, MDH, and DHS and in accordance with any executive orders from the governor of MN

**SCHOOL CLOSURES:** Late openings and school closings will be determined by the North St. Paul – Maplewood – Oakdale School District 622. It is ultimately the parents'/guardians decision whether or not their child should attend school during inclement weather.

- Several radio and television stations will be notified by 6:00 a.m. (when at all possible) of the decision to close the school; this includes the following: WCCO Radio (830 am) WCCO TV (channel 4) KSTPTV (channel 5) KSTC TV (channel 45 FOX 9) KARE TV (channel 11)
- An email will also be sent to all families
- If District 622 declares a late start due to weather, GELC will be closed.

## BRINGING CHILDREN TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Gethsemane Early Learning Center requires that the adult, 18 years or older, bringing your child to school must accompany him/her to the classroom and sign the Classroom SIGN- IN/SIGN-OUT SHEET. This sheet must also be signed with first and last name before the child will be RELEASED from the classroom. Children ARE NOT TO BE DROPPED OFF AT THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE/HALL DOOR. Please remain with the child until he/she has been greeted by the teacher in the classroom and admitted to school for that day. Please be aware that teachers are busy preparing before the beginning of each session, and are not available for early drop off in the classroom. Please enroll in before care and drop off there accordingly.

If the parent is unable to pick the child up from preschool, your child will only be released to persons listed on the emergency form. Siblings will not be allowed to pick up children unless they are at least 18 years of age or older. Picture ID will be required the first time for the child to be released to that person. Because small children may worry when parents are late, we urge every parent to be **prompt** in picking your child up from school.

**PARENT/CHILD SEPARATION:** It is not unusual for a child to become teary or cry when separating from a parent in an unfamiliar situation or at drop off. Remember, this is a new environment with new faces. A child is bound to feel a little uncomfortable. Be encouraging! Your smile, eyes, and body language communicate a lot and help your little one feel safe and confident!

**PROMPT PICK UP:** It is important and necessary for you to pick up your child/and or carpool on time. A child whose ride is late, experiences great anxiety and worries. It is difficult for your child (ren) and for the teacher who often needs to prepare for the next class and/or class activity. We understand that emergencies happen. If an emergency occurs, please take time to give us a call. There is a \$10.00 fee per child for each 15 minutes you are late, which is payable immediately when you pick up your child, whether from class, or the extended day program.

**PARKING:** Parking is available at Gethsemane on the south side of the building. Please DO NOT park in the disabled parking spots unless you have a legal parking pass to do so. During arrival and/or pickup **never:**

- Leave children unattended in your vehicle
- Leave your vehicle running
- Leave pets unattended in your vehicle
- Leave valuables in your vehicle, even if you think they are hidden

**FORGOTTEN CHILD:** If no one comes to pick up your child, staff will first try contacting you via the information on the emergency cards, then your designated, listed emergency contacts, and finally legal authorities. You will need to contact the legal authorities/representative for pick up arrangements.

## VISITORS

Because of state licensing requirements, young relatives/friends of preschool children cannot be allowed to attend preschool unless they are enrolled in our program.

**PARENT PARTICIPATION:** Gethsemane Early Learning Center welcomes and encourages parents to participate in the classroom. Parents are welcome and can visit at any time. We ask that arrangements be made in advance with the teacher so plans can be made to utilize parent availability. Please make other arrangements for siblings/your other children when visiting or volunteering at school. **All adults volunteering in Gethsemane classrooms MUST complete Gethsemane's "Volunteer Training Program," have a background check through our school, and wear a "Visitor's Badge" while in the building.**

**SPECIAL VISITORS:** We encourage special visitors such as fire fighters, police officers, doctors, dentists, etc. to come and visit our classrooms during the year. Again, we ask that arrangements

be made in advance with the classroom teacher. Background checks and such procedures still apply.

## CONFERENCES

In order that parents are well informed of their child's intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual growth, as observed while attending Gethsemane Early Learning Center, individual conferences will be offered to your child's family, one in the fall and one in the spring. Specific dates will be posted outside your child's classroom, sent home, and posted online in classroom newsletters. Conferences provide an excellent time to review your child's growth and to plan for the future. Parents will receive a written evaluation of their child at that time, and a copy will also be placed in your child's school file.

## PASTORAL CARE

Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC) families are invited to call on the Pastor(s) and/or Stephen Ministers of Gethsemane Lutheran Faith community if you are in need of pastoral care for any reason. Please contact the school/church office to receive current contact information: 651-739-7540.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

**\*Gethsemane Early Learning Center cooperates with state and local government disaster planning agencies to prepare for, or respond to, emergencies presented by a pandemic outbreak. Rule 3-07.**

**GENERAL HEALTH POLICY:** Children attending Gethsemane Early Learning Center must arrive well. Children must be at least 24 hours free of illness symptoms, including 24 hours free of medication treating or preventing any illness. If your child shows symptoms of illness upon arrival at school he/she will be sent home. Please do not send your child to school if the following symptoms exist WITHIN THE LAST 24 HOURS:

1. Fever: Child must remain fever free, *without medication*, for 24 hours before returning to school. 24 hours begins once fever has broken.
2. Rash: A rash can be a sign of many illnesses. Please do not send your child to school until seen by a doctor.
3. Signs of flu: Vomiting, upset stomach, sore throat, discharge from the ears, green discharge from nose. Please keep your child home until s/he feels well.
4. Severe cold: Severe cough, yellow/green phlegm, yellow/greenish sinus discharge.
5. Conjunctivitis: Red, "crusty", itchy eyes. Conjunctivitis, or pink eye, is very contagious and often painful and uncomfortable. Your child must be kept home for 24 hours while being treated with antibiotics and can only return to school if there is no discharge from the eyes.

6. Vomiting: Your child may return to school no sooner than 24 hours after the last episode.
7. Diarrhea: Your child may return to school no sooner than 24 hours after the last episode.
8. Head lice: Your child may return to school 24 hours following treatment, provided no live lice are present. Please notify your teacher ASAP in order to prevent an outbreak.
9. Shows deviation from his usual behavior or appetite: If your child can not fully participate in his/her day, please keep him/her home to rest and heal.

Families should **contact the school within 24 hours if your child comes down with any contagious illness**. Likewise, families will be notified of any illnesses exposed at school. **NO STUDENT NAMES WILL BE SHARED.**

The parent or the person(s) listed on the emergency contact list must always be available by phone or email during your child's school attendance hours. It is the parents' responsibility to have someone available who can come to the school to pick up your child in case of an emergency or illness, and within 30 minutes of the initially placed call, email, etc.

It is inevitable that children will catch infectious diseases, but we can control and sometimes prevent them through the following procedures:

- Require vaccinations for vaccine preventable diseases. It is required by law that each child has documentation of required immunizations on file before your child may attend. If there is a medical exemption or parental objection, the statement must be signed and notarized.
- A current physical examination, within one year, by your child's health care provider, must be signed by your clinic and on file before your child may attend school.
- Provide parent health education and information. All infection and communicable diseases that children are exposed to are reported in writing to parents.
- Require proper sanitation practices, including good hand washing techniques of staff and children, and frequent classroom and equipment cleaning and disinfecting procedures.
- Children being symptom free for at least 24 hours without medication treating the illness before returning to preschool.

It will be left to the discretion of the classroom teacher in collaboration with the Director to exclude the child from the classroom if the child appears to be ill or not feeling well. If a child becomes ill during the preschool session, his/her parent, or responsible person, will be contacted and asked to pick up the child within 30 minutes. Until the child is picked up, he/she will stay in a supervised, possibly isolated area quipped with a cot. If treatment of a more serious nature is required, we will call 911 and then continue our efforts to contact you and/or the emergency contact.

**BATHROOM POLICY:** Children need to be fully independent in the bathroom in order to attend Gethsemane Early Learning Center. To be considered fully independent, a child must be able to realize the need to use the bathroom, pull pants up/down, use the toilet, wipe, and wash hands. If your child has 2 or more bowel accidents in a two week period, or 3 or more urination

accidents in a two week period, your son/daughter will be asked to stay at home until toilet training is completed. We are **not licensed** to change diapers nor to clean/wipe children's bottoms. Children are encouraged to clean themselves and as best they can.

**MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY CARE:** Children's emergency information is available in the first aid kit, in the classroom student files, in the Teacher's Workroom/office and in the Directors' Office.

- If a child becomes ill or has an accident at school, parents will be contacted immediately. If parents or guardians cannot be reached, it will be necessary to call the relative or friend you have placed on the emergency contact list. Be sure the numbers you leave allow us to reach a person and not an answering machine, and that they either live or work within 30 minutes of the school allowing them capability to pick up your child if necessary. **It is important for the safety and well-being of your child that you take the responsibility to keep this information up to date.**
- Minor first aid will be performed by our staff. All staff have been trained and certified in First Aid and CPR. Parents will be notified by a written notice of any injuries that occurred during the course of your child's day. Parents are asked to sign the note and return it to the teacher to be put in your child's file.
- Children will be transported to your preferred hospital if the situation is non-life threatening and if a local emergency resource believes it is necessary. Otherwise, children will be transported to Region's Hospital in St. Paul. In some medical situations, the staff will need to contact the emergency resources before the parent, child's physician, and/or other adult acting on the parent's behalf.
- For children enrolled in Gethsemane Early Learning Center (GELC), parents are required to sign an agreement to allow the administration of medication as prescribed by your child's physician or dentist. A record of all medication administered will be documented. All medication must be in the original container with the doctor's/pharmacist's instruction label attached. All medications will be inaccessible to children.
- First aid kits and emergency booklets will be kept in each classroom
- The younger children will be monitored in washing their hands and toileting. Individual disposable towels will be provided. Wet or spoiled clothing will be changed promptly and placed in plastic bags, placed in your child's back pack to bring home and launder.

**SUPERVISION:** It is our policy that a preschool child will never be left unattended or unobserved by our staff.

**PREVENTION TRAINING:** The staff at Gethsemane Early Learning Center are trained to protect children from potential harm as well as to respond quickly and appropriately to the emergencies that do arise. Periodic training is acquired by taking required classes that meet the requirements for First Aid and CPR training designed by the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division. This training prepares them to:

a) Recognize children as a particularly vulnerable age group for accidental trauma. b) Understand the concept of emergency preparedness as the means to prevent as well as manage accidental trauma. c) Recognize and eliminate the potential dangers to children in the setting. d) Determine when and how to call emergency medical services. e) Respond with appropriate first aid measures for emergency situations common to children. All staff members will be trained in pediatric first aid and CPR. f) Acknowledge and respond appropriately to the emotional needs of children experiencing an emergency situation. g) Understand the importance of accurately documenting and reporting accidental trauma.

### **ACCIDENT PREVENTION PROCEDURES:**

a) Our classrooms are inspected daily for safety hazards, repairs to be made, and/or defective equipment to be removed. Staff are trained to follow safety rules to avoid and prevent injuries. b) Children will be watched closely when they are using play equipment which may present dangers. c) Children will be shown the correct way to use equipment. d) Large scissors and cleaning supplies will be stored out of reach of children. e) Safety shields have been installed to protect fingers from becoming caught on the classroom doors.

### **PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCIES OR ACCIDENTS:**

a) The staff has been trained in procedures to follow in the event of a blizzard, tornado, or other natural disaster that includes the location of emergency shelter. b) Emergency room evacuation routes are posted in each room. c) Staff and children are required to participate in monthly emergency drills, including fire, tornado, and lock-down procedures. d) If the children need to evacuate the building for a short length of time they will walk to the garage which is just southeast of the Gethsemane building. If the length of time is much greater the children will be walked to Beaver Lake School just east of Gethsemane. e) The teachers have been trained in fire prevention, the use of fire extinguishers, and other procedures to follow in the event of a fire. Fire extinguishers are located in the hall outside the classrooms and are tested annually. f) All electrical outlets not in use are covered and/or safety protected. g) It is our policy that no preschool child will ever be unaccompanied or unsupervised.

**OTHER SAFETY PROCEDURES: EMERGENCY CALLS:** Each classroom has a telephone that is accessible. Staff are instructed as to when and how to call for emergency help. A list of emergency numbers is posted by the telephone.

**MISSING CHILD:** If a child cannot be located, police will be notified first, followed immediately by notification to the parent or, if the parent cannot be reached, to the emergency contact.

**AUTHORIZED PICK-UP:** Children will be released only to those individuals authorized by the parent or guardian, and age eighteen (18) years or older. Any changes in such authorizations



should be reported to the teacher or principal.

**UNAUTHORIZED PICK-UP:** If an unauthorized or incapacitated person attempts to pick up a child the following steps will be taken as needed:

a) The teacher will ask to see written authorization. b) If there is no written authorization, the teacher will refuse to release the child and will send the other teacher for the Principal, or another classroom teacher. If the unauthorized person attempts to use force to remove your child, the staff will not be expected to endanger themselves, but will immediately seek assistance by dialing 9-1-1 and observing the direction taken by that person. c) No child will be released to an incapacitated individual. Staff will call the parent or other emergency contact to pick up the child.

**ACCIDENTS:** A release statement will be obtained from each parent allowing for quick medical care in case of an accident while at school. If it is suspected that an injury will require professional medical treatment an accident form will be completed and placed in your child's file with a copy given to you, as parents. An accident log is available for recording accidents, injuries and incidents. This log will be analyzed regularly by the preschool director of licensing and student's lead teacher. GELC practice will be modified on the basis of this analysis to reduce the accident risk.

**POISON CONTROL:** Gethsemane Early Learning Center has taken every precaution to ensure that potential poisons are out of reach of the children we teach and care for. In the event of an accidental poisoning our staff will call and consult with the Poison Control Center, and call 9-1-1 if instructed to do so. Parents/guardians will be notified.

## LEGAL ISSUES

**ABUSE:** Early childhood employees and school staff are all mandated by law to report any suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of children in the home, school, and community setting. If the Principal, Director, or Teacher suspects abuse, or neglect, either at home or in the school/center, they will call the designated county's Children's Services Intake. If your child is in immediate danger staff will immediately call the local Police Department or the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department @ 9-1-1.

**SEPARATION/DIVORCE:** In the case of parental separation or divorce, the following information about custody arrangements must be procured to meet legal requirements.

- Name(s) of persons with legal custody of your child.
- Name(s) of persons with physical custody of your child.
- Name(s) of persons with visitation rights and such schedule of your child.
- Name(s) of persons with joint legal and/or physical custody of your child.

- Name(s) of persons with the right to make child care and/or educational decisions concerning your child.
- Name(s) of persons with the right to make medical decisions concerning your child.

**RESEARCH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS:** If GELC or any child in our program is involved in any type of experimental research or public relations activity, a signed permission form will be obtained from a parent(s) before it is undertaken. Such permission will be required for each and such activity. Signed forms will be maintained in the child's records.

## **BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE POLICY**

It is the aim of Gethsemane Early Learning Center that your child has a safe and nurturing environment in which to attend school. We intend to help your child develop safe and appropriate behaviors and interactions in regards to themselves, others, and their environment. Young children learn independence and self-control by experimenting, testing limits, and experiencing the consequences of their actions. GELC teachers assist children in developing self control and respect for self, others, and their surroundings, including property, by setting and enforcing limits. The behavior guidance policy has been developed to provide for the safety of your child, children in the program and school, and the staff of GELC. It is designed to foster and encourage healthy and positive behaviors, and provide immediate, and directly related consequences to prevent, redirect, limit and stop a child's unacceptable behavior.

Guidance begins with respect and the establishment of a warm relationship between individuals. To facilitate the growth and learning of social skills, GELC will:

- Provide a positive model of acceptable behavior by staff and volunteers.
- Structure activities appropriate to age level and class size to avoid conflicting situations as much as possible.
- Attempt to redirect a child away from an inappropriate activity to a more constructive activity in order to reduce conflict and encourage self-control.
- Teach children positive and alternate ways to handle frustrations and conflicts, with particular emphasis on the use of verbalizing their feelings and to/with others.
- Employ a minimum number of rules and help children understand the need for them.
- Have adequate adult availability to assist children in working through conflict and in regaining self-control that exhibits respect for self, others, and property.

**SEPARATION FROM THE GROUP:** If a child is unable to regain their self control through redirection, they may need to be temporarily separated from the group. The teacher or assistant will remove the child from the group or activity and stay with him/her until he/she is ready to return to the group or activity. All separations from the group due to behavior guidance are noted on a daily log and will be shared with the parent/guardian.

**PERSISTENT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR** In the event of continuing unacceptable behavior; verbal, emotional, physical violence or harm against self, others (peers, staff, and property) that does not respond to the above mentioned efforts by staff, the following steps will be taken:

1. Staff will observe and record the unacceptable behavior;
2. Document actions taken by staff to modify or correct the behavior;
3. Contact and arrange a meeting with staff and parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss the child's behavior and develop a plan to address the unacceptable behavior;
4. If the staff requests it and preferably with the parents' approval, the school may request consultation with appropriate community resources. It may be possible that this group setting is not appropriate for your child at this time. Gethsemane Early Learning Center will assist parents in finding a new program should this be deemed necessary and appropriate for the child's development and overall safety of the child, his/her peers, and teaching staff;
5. Corporal punishment will never be used as a disciplinary technique. Corporal punishment includes, but is not limited to; rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, hitting and spanking. Physical punishment is not legal and will never be used. Staff will also avoid use of verbal and emotional abuse such as shaming, ostracism, name calling, derogatory remarks about a child or any other language which might threaten, humiliate or frighten a child. Also prohibited are punishment for lapses in toilet habits, withholding food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care as a punishment for unacceptable behavior, use of mechanical restraints, such as tying, or the use of physical restraint other than to physically hold a child for comfort when containment is necessary to protect a child or others from harm;
6. If all steps have been taken and it is in the best interest of the child/school, the school has the right to immediately dis-enroll the student and recommend that the family pursue other education or care options for their child.

**SEPARATION LOG:** Separation from the group must be noted on a daily log which states the child's name, staff person's name, time, date, duration of separation, and information indicating what less intrusive methods were used to guide your child's behavior, and how your child's behavior continued to threaten the well-being of other children in attendance. If a child is separated from the group three times or more in one day, the child's parent shall be notified. If a child is separated from the group five times or more in one week or eight or more times in two weeks, "unacceptable behavior" guidelines will be followed as described. Persistent unacceptable behavior that requires an increased amount of staff guidance and time will be documented along with the staff response to the behavior.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Gethsemane Early Learning Center is eager to meet the needs of families. If you have a concern

about the program you are strongly urged to share your concerns. Parents are encouraged to speak with your child's teacher first. Your child's teacher will set up a conference at any time one is requested and will visit with the parent in person, or on the telephone. Teachers will respond to a parent's concern in 1-3 business days. If after speaking with your child's teacher you would still like, or need additional information, or your concerns are not resolved satisfactorily, you should then speak to the Director. If necessary, the Director will take the issue to the School Board, who will participate in the final resolution with you and the grievance.

## **DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Gethsemane Early Learning Center strives to maintain an environment free of all forms of discriminatory behavior, including all forms of harassment directed toward individuals with disabilities, or the race, ethnic origin, gender, or age of an individual. Therefore, the use of derogatory remarks or displays of insensitive treatment, directly or indirectly related to individuals with disabilities or the race, ethnic origin, gender, or age of an individual will not be tolerated.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

If concerns arise regarding your child's learning and/or development, he/she may be assessed by the Early Childhood Special Education assessment team from the school district you live in. Gethsemane Early Learning Center staff will support your family in any way possible and within our program and school capacities.

## **PERSONAL ITEMS**

Please label all sweaters, jackets, coats, school bags, backpacks, lunch boxes, rest time items, etc. with your child's full name. Often a child will have a garment or item similar or identical to someone else's in the classroom. Dress your child in comfortable, practical clothing for painting or playing outdoors. Send your child each day dressed for outside play. Closed-toe, tennis shoes are preferable. Dress-up shoes have slick soles, and sandals and flip-flops are both dangerous and inappropriate for active play. Children's clothing should also be uncomplicated, easy to remove by themselves so that they can easily use the bathroom by themselves. Please bring a change of clothes (seasonally appropriate) in your child's backpack in case of an accident; water or milk spill, messy art project mishap, bathroom accident, etc.

## **NAP/REST PROCEDURES**

Children who are staying for the afternoon Busy Bees program will have the opportunity to rest/nap for at least 30 minutes. Children will not be required to rest for longer than 30 minutes, though children may nap for longer as needed. After 30 minutes, children who have completed their rest will engage in quiet activities in another area while others may continue their naps. Cots

or mats will be provided, and each child will have a rest area where both a staff member and child can have unimpeded access from at least one side. Please limit your child's rest time items to one small pillow, a blanket, and one small, non- noise making stuffed animal if wanted/needed. Toys and "hard objects" (Barbie dolls, race cars, action figures, etc.) are not allowed. Please label and store all rest items in a labeled bag, and bring it home weekly to be properly washed/cleaned.

## **SHARING TIME ON SPECIFIED DAYS**

Teachers will allow for each child to bring something from home to share. Because our program emphasizes peace, no aggressive items are allowed (guns, swords, weapons, etc). We encourage you to help your child pick a "treasure" that is in relationship with the theme that week, that relates to your family life or is educational. Please label all items with your child's name before sending it to school. We request that items are

- Able to fit in their back pack
- Not fragile or valuable
- Not "mouth toys," such as whistles, bubble pipes, etc.
- No guns, swords, or other weapons
- Parents will be notified of "Sharing Time"

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Gethsemane Early Learning Center classes take field trips throughout the school year. The cost of these trips will be assessed at the time that the trip permission slip is sent home. **Chaperones for field trips are REQUIRED to complete volunteer training through Gethsemane Lutheran Church and School.** Parents will be informed of field trips in advance and approval will be secured on a permission form. GELC is prohibited from taking your child off site without parental or guardian permission. If you choose not to allow your child to attend the field trip the parent/guardian is responsible for finding alternate care for their child during that time/day. Since volunteers are responsible for your children, other arrangements should be made for siblings.

## **COVID-19 PLAN to be updated as needed**

.....The mission of Gethsemane Lutheran School is to partner with families to provide a Christian education where academic excellence and faith formation walk hand in hand. We celebrate all students as children of God, nurturing their development in mind, body, and spirit to equip them as servants of Christ in the world.

The current global COVID-19 pandemic has prompted unprecedented reflection on how to best educate children while considering their overall social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual health. Having deeply considered all these factors, the leadership of Gethsemane Lutheran School has concluded that what is ultimately best for our students and families is that

we open the 2020- 2021 school year on-campus and in-person. This re-opening is contingent on having a well thought-out, data-informed system of health and safety protocols implemented from day one.

It is with great joy and thanksgiving that we continue coming together to live, work, and play in Christian Community! The following health and safety protocols reflect just how much we truly value this opportunity. All of the following policies and procedures are designed to keep both our students and staff healthy, so that we might continue to do school together and in-person. Because Gethsemane exists for students, their health and safety is of paramount concern. However, the safety of faculty and staff, who are in higher risk categories than students, is also vital, because a healthy staff is critical for our ability to carry on operations and serve students and families. We have all learned that things regularly change, sometimes quickly, in the midst of this pandemic. Therefore, the following procedures and protocols are, of course, subject to change.

## **BEFORE-SCHOOL SCREENINGS & ENTRANCE PROCEDURES**

Parents are asked to evaluate their children's health every day before sending them to school. Children that have had a fever or vomited within the past 24 hours should remain at home. Every student entering Gethsemane will have their temperatures taken before being allowed to enter the building. Additionally, any parent or building visitor will have temperatures taken before being allowed entrance.

When students are dropped off parents must walk them inside the front door and sign them in while their temperature is taken. Parents should not leave until their child's temperature has been taken, and they have been cleared. This will take place right inside the front entrance of the school doors. Parents should wear a face mask when entering the building for any reason.

Following the school day we are asking that parents pick up their child on the sidewalk outside the main school doors. Students will be brought out to the front entrance to be picked up.

## **ENHANCED SANITATION MEASURES**

- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school. Teachers will dispense hand sanitizer for preschool students.
- Table surfaces will be sanitized before each use.
- All common areas and frequently touched surfaces (door handles, counters, trash containers) will be cleaned throughout the day.
- Restrooms will be cleaned twice a day.
- A plan to teach/remind students about healthy sanitation practices will be implemented throughout the year.

## **ENHANCED IN-SCHOOL SAFETY MEASURES**

Teachers will work with preschool students to encourage physical distancing whenever possible. Toys, art supplies, and manipulatives will be cleaned between use. Soft toys, such as stuffed animals are difficult to clean and will be removed from the classroom.

### **Masks**

Face masks, covering nose and mouth, will be worn by teachers at all times while in the building, except when eating and drinking, participating in aerobic activities, or while outside and distanced. Preschool students are not required to wear face masks but are encouraged to do so. According to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old are not required to wear face coverings, but are encouraged to wear a face covering when in public if they can do so reliably in compliance with CDC guidance on how to wear cloth face coverings (ie: without frequently touching or removing the face covering). Older children, school staff, and adult visitors will be required to wear a mask when in our building.

**Classrooms** The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that student work spaces be at least 3 to 6 feet apart, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also recommends a distance of 3 to 6 feet when feasible. Surfaces will be cleaned between groups of children. High touch areas such as table and counter surfaces, light switches, door knobs, etc will be cleaned frequently throughout the day.

**Lunch** Student seating will be spread out at the lunch table. Surfaces will be sanitized before and after use.

**Teachers and Staff** Teachers and Staff will abide by the same health and safety protocols as students and visitors.

**Outdoors** The outdoors will be used as much as possible.

**BEFORE AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROCEDURES** Parents are requested to use the before and aftercare program as little as possible during this time. If you have alternative options we would love to limit the number of students in our extended day program. When students are dropped off parents must walk them inside the front door and sign them in while their temperature is taken. Parents should not leave until their child's temperature has been taken and they have been cleared. This will take place right inside the front entrance of the school doors. Parents should wear a mask when entering the building for any reason. Following the school day we are asking that parents pick up their child on the sidewalk outside the main school doors. Students will be brought out to the front entrance to be picked up. Parents who pick up their children from the extended care program should enter the school doors where a staff member will check out your child for the day.

## **PROTOCOLS FOR SUSPECTED OR POSITIVE CASES OF COVID-19**

Students who exhibit Covid-19 symptoms during the school day will be removed from the rest of the class, and a staff member will remain with them until the parents/guardians arrive to pick them up. Parents are required to pick students up within an hour from when they are notified. Students sent home with flu-like symptoms must be tested for COVID- 19. Parents must notify the school of the test results. Information regarding this test will be kept confidential and will not appear in a student's record. Non-confidential, non- identifying information will be provided to local health officials, staff, and school families in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. If the student has been ill without testing positive for COVID-19, he/she may not return to school until fever free and symptom-free for 72 hours without the use of over-the-counter medications. Students who test positive for COVID-19 must remain quarantined for 10 days prior to returning to school. Students who live in the same household as the infected person are also required to quarantine themselves for 10 days prior to returning to school. If a parent, sibling attending another school, or anyone else in a student's household should test positive for COVID- 19, that student must quarantine for 10 days prior to returning to school. If the school becomes aware that its own in- school safety protocols were not followed during a time when a student was known to be infected, or that an infected student interacted with other Gethsemane students outside of school in an unsafe manner (more than 15 minutes, unmasked, without physical distancing), all students who interacted with the infected student in an unsafe manner will also be required to self-quarantine for 10 days. Depending on the circumstances, larger groups of students may need to be quarantined. To the extent that the school is aware, parents will be notified if their student was within 3-6 feet, for more than 15 minutes, of a student who is known to have tested positive for COVID-19.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

- Please pray regularly for our students, teachers, staff, and families. Pray for safety, health, wisdom, and the Joy of the Lord to transform even the greatest challenges of this year.
- Please be patient and gracious with our administration, teachers, and students. They are all attempting to do their best to serve students and families in incredibly challenging times.
- Please share about Gethsemane Early Learning Center and Gethsemane Lutheran School with families who might like to learn more.
- Consider donating. We are accepting donations to the Gethsemane Lutheran Coronavirus Assistance Fund. This fund allows for tuition grants to Gethsemane families who have significant need because of lost income due to the coronavirus.

We live in turbulent times. Stress, anxiety, and depression are on the rise. Heated divisions over culture, politics, and even how to respond to COVID-19 all too often bring out the worst in people.



Young people are not immune to any of this. But praise be to our God! It is, in fact, in times like this that the Gospel of Jesus shines all the more brightly! “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God!” says our God (Isaiah 41:10).

*~Thank you for entrusting us with your most precious gift – your child. Together, we can raise up a generation strong in spirit and solid in faith.~*