

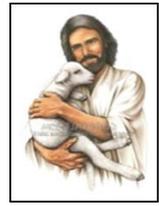
"News from Your School"

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Our Preschool Class: A Gift! A Blessing!



This past summer, our school was gifted with a trial year of 3-year-old preschool. Our teachers have given their time, and an anonymous donor provided the seed money for this addition to our school ministry at Good Shepherd. ***What a gift!*** Throughout the first quarter of the school year, it has been a joy for me to become acquainted with our youngest students, as well as to be able to observe firsthand the growth and learning that has taken place in the spiritual, social, emotional, and educational development of each student. And as we have all had time to consider our newest ministry, some questions have naturally arisen. I will attempt to address a few of those questions

How is preschool different from daycare? Simply put, daycare is a program where working parents can safely leave their children while both parents are at work: all day, all week long. Preschool is for families whose children are home with a parent, or whose children are cared for in a home setting by a grandparent or in-home daycare provider. These parents want to provide an opportunity, for a couple of mornings a week, for their young children to learn the skills and independence necessary to meet the demands of today's Kindergarten. "Kids in preschool discover that they are capable and can do things for themselves -- from small tasks like pouring their own juice and helping set snack tables to tackling bigger issues like making decisions about how to spend their free time," says Angela Capone, PhD, senior program manager at Southwest Human Development's Arizona Institute for Childhood Development, in Phoenix.

How does 3-year-old preschool fit into Good Shepherd's educational ministries? Age 3 is when parents seek to find a formal preschool program to prepare their children for Kindergarten. ***What a blessing it is*** that our teachers are specialized for that age group and can offer this important first step in the

education of these little ones! To that end, we recognize we do not have a 4K or Kindergarten program to complete our school. In the meantime, our 3-year-old program can serve as a bridge for the preschool families to become better acquainted with our family of faith. They not only will be able to check out our elementary school, but also be able to participate in the activities provided by J-Crew, VBS, and, hopefully, choose to visit Church and Sunday school. Then, when God provides both the means and the opportunity, we pray the "gap" in our school will be filled. Speaking of such opportunities, on Saturday, January 20, a great opportunity is available for all members of Good Shepherd to learn "How to Position our School for Outreach." Anyone can attend. In fact, our congregation is already registered! Would you consider coming to learn how to make our guest families feel welcome? (Ask Bruce Mohns for more information about this upcoming event.)

How much can a young 3-year-old learn in preschool? Quite a lot, actually! If you have taken a peek into the preschool classroom (located in the north-side classrooms, down the hall from the church office), it would appear that it is simply a well-organized play room. And while it definitely is well-organized and quite an inviting environment in which play "happens," it is far from simple. Each learning center (a.k.a. "play area"), while always present, changes weekly based on a carefully chosen Bible lesson. A theme is then developed from the Bible lesson. From there, different activities that reinforce the Bible lesson and theme provide opportunities to learn additional new skills. These activities are woven together to provide an edifying and engaging morning for our students. As the children "play", explore, and practice getting along with others, they learn valuable life skills along with acquiring a solid, foundational knowledge for their future school years. In addition to the centers, the teachers provide whole group lessons and read stories,

based on the theme of the week. Each week, the children are enriched through the age-appropriate activities carefully chosen and prepared by our teachers. That 3-year-olds can learn so much during two short mornings a week is indeed **a blessing!**

Curious? Want to know more? Everyone is truly welcome to come and see our preschool in action! Our preschool teachers, Kelli Harris and Amanda Irwin,

would be happy to have you schedule a visit. Until then, please join me in **thanking God** for **this gift** to reach more children with the amazing love that He freely gave to all of us through the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you, Heavenly Father. Amen!

Blessed Christmas! ~ Mrs. T



I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13