



Parent Handbook 2017-2018

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Introduction

Welcome to Aldersgate Weekday Children's Ministry (WCM)! We are delighted that you have chosen our school for your child's preschool education and childcare.

Aldersgate WCM is a ministry of Aldersgate United Methodist Church and receives guidance and spiritual support from the church. The WCM supports and participates in the mission and ministry of the church as it serves its membership and the community. The Christian principles of the United Methodist Church guide the ethical code by which the WCM was founded and is sustained. Aldersgate United Methodist Church is fully dedicated to act on behalf of the needs, rights, and well-being of the children of the WCM.

Our teaching staff is a team of well-trained and experienced individuals. Each member of our team brings to our staff their unique experiences and expertise allowing the WCM to provide a childcare and education experience that compares to no other. The WCM provides a developmentally appropriate, curriculum-based approach to education while adding enrichment opportunities such as chapel, music, art, gymnastics and field trips.

It is the philosophy of the WCM and its staff that children, their families and the community benefit from high-quality early childhood programs. We believe that there is a critical link between a child's early experiences and later success in life. We believe that you cannot separate childcare and education; children learn best through their play, interactions and experiences.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide quality childcare and education in a Christian environment that provides opportunities for spiritual, educational, emotional and physical development.

Program Goals and Standards

Goals

The learning environment at the WCM is structured in such a way as to give the child an opportunity to independently explore, select, create, and problem solve. Classrooms are organized around interest centers and play areas that include art, math, science, language arts, blocks, dramatic play, cooking, and nutrition. The WCM staff plans and facilitates these experiences for the total development of your child. In order to do this, we have the following Program Goals:

- To provide a quality program to meet the needs of our students.
- To provide a stimulating, multicultural environment with developmentally appropriate activities for intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual growth.
- To support and enhance relationships between WCM staff and families.

Standards

The WCM is an Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) licensed facility and adheres to the regulations and procedures set forth in the Minimum Standards for Day Care and Nighttime Centers, 2007. We are reviewed annually by DHR. In addition, the WCM is annually inspected by the Health Department and the Fire Marshal. The WCM remains in compliance with all standards.

DHR Child:Teacher Ratios

The Weekday Children's Ministry is licensed for 186 children. The WCM complies with and/or exceeds the Department of Human Resources required student:teacher ratios:

Classroom	DHR Ratio	WCM Ratio
Nursery A (6 weeks -18 months)	5:1	3:1
Nursery B (6-18 months)	5:1	5:1
Toddler A (12-24 months)	5:1	5:1
Toddler B (18-30 months)	7:1	7:1
Younger 2's (24-36 months)	8:1	8:1
Middle and Older 2's (2.5-3 years)	11:1	11:1
Threes	11:1	11:1
Fours	18:1	14:1

Curriculum

In order to meet the needs of all our students and teachers, the WCM uses a variety of curriculums including Creative Curriculum, Thematic Units/Themes, and Abeka. Our teachers are very creative and include many extra activities to enrich their curriculum and help them meet the goals and objectives for the students in their classrooms.

Registration and Enrollment

Families are encouraged to tour the facility, meet teachers, review classroom schedules, and become familiar with our policies and fees before enrolling their child.

Open enrollment is offered each spring. Dates are announced on the website, through letters and emails to parents, and in local parent magazines. One week prior to open enrollment, current students are given the opportunity to enroll for the following year.

Enrollment is year-round (August - August). There is not a second registration for the summer. If your child will not be attending in the summer, you must give written notice to the office staff during or before enrollment in the spring. If the notice is not returned by the due date, parents will be responsible for tuition for the summer, unless we can fill the spot. We also offer a summer-only registration if space is available and a Summer Kids Program for school-age children.

Younger students are placed in age groups according to age at the time of enrollment. Students ages 3 and up will be placed in appropriate age groups based on the September 1 public school cut off date. We will not place children beyond their age group.

A registration packet will be given to you. This packet must be returned to the office staff before your child's first day of attendance. Paperwork and fees that must be provided include:

- Registration Fee
- Annual Fees
- Registration Form
- DHR Preadmission Form

- Emergency Contact Information Sheet
- Parent Handbook Agreement
- Valid Immunization Record (Original Alabama Immunization Record that must be obtained from your doctor's office)
- Media Consent Form
- Tuition Disclaimer
- Student Information Sheet
- Early Care Registration Form (if applicable)
- Special Notices Form (if applicable)

Please Note: Immunization Records have expiration dates. You will receive a notice when your child's Immunization Record is about to expire. It is your responsibility to get an updated Immunization Record to the office staff prior to the expiration date. Per DHR Regulations, all students must have a current, valid Immunization Record on file to attend school.

Teacher Requests

Upon enrollment, if you would like to request a teacher for your child, you may give a written request to the office staff. Our top priority is to create a well balanced classroom which makes it possible for each child to thrive. Therefore, we will take your request into consideration, but we do not guarantee teacher requests. Please keep in mind that we will do what is best for every student.

Hours of Operation

- Monday - Friday year round
- 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM Full-time care
- 7:00 AM - 7:30 AM Early Care for those registered

Tuition and Fees

Tuition

Weekly tuition is charged and due on Monday of each week. A \$10 late fee will be charged to any account with a balance due at close of business (5:30pm) on Fridays. If payments are made late on a continuous basis we reserve the right to request that payment be made each Monday when children are signed in at school. If the account balance owed is equal to or more than two weeks of tuition and the total balance due is not paid by close of business on Friday of the current week, enrollment will be terminated and a \$20 late fee will be charged to the account. Upon receipt of the total balance due and a \$50 re-enrollment fee, the student can be re-enrolled if a spot is still available. If the total balance due is not received within 30 days of termination, the account will be sent to collections.

If you are having financial difficulties, please make an appointment to talk with the WCM Director(s) before your account is declared delinquent. Failure to respond to Aldersgate WCM collection efforts will result in your account being turned over to a collection agency, and will result in additional collections fees.

Checks, money orders, cashier's checks, and bank drafts should be made payable to Aldersgate WCM **with the child's name on the "for" line**. Please drop payments in the Tuition Box located on the wall outside the office door.

Early Care

The WCM provides an Early Care service from 7:00 AM – 7:30 AM daily. This service is available only to those families who have registered. The cost for Early Care is \$20 per week per child, and will be added to your weekly tuition charge. There are no credits for days when the service is not used. However, if you are taking a vacation week and receiving the 50% vacation credit, you will also receive a 50% credit for Early Care for that week. As with vacation credit, you will only receive two weeks of credit for Early Care and they must correspond with vacation weeks. Please use the normal sign-in procedure, but use 7:00 indicating Early Care. Please notify the office staff if you plan to discontinue the service once you have signed up.

Tuition Rates are as follows:

- Nursery A&B \$170 weekly
- Toddler A \$160 weekly
- Toddler B \$150 weekly
- 2's \$145 weekly
- K3 & K4 \$140 weekly
- Early Care \$20 weekly

Families with two students will receive a 10% discount for the lesser tuition amount. Families with three students will receive a 10% discount for the least tuition amount and a 5% discount for the 2nd least tuition amount. **However, discounts will not be applied to nursery or toddler aged children.**

Annual Fees

These are non-refundable fees due at the time of enrollment.

- **Registration Fee** \$100 (Nursery A – K4)
- **Curriculum Fee** \$30 (Toddler – 2s)
\$45 (K3 – K4)

Curriculum includes workbooks and/or sheets, journals, assessments, etc.

- **Activity Fee** \$70

This fee includes a WCM T-shirt (Toddler A – K4 to wear on field trips and special days) and all activities that the WCM does throughout the year, such as Pictures with Santa, Halloween, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Spring Programs, Water Days, End of Summer Party, etc.

Other Fees

A late pick-up fee of \$10 per child will be charged to your account when a student is not picked up by 5:30 PM with an additional fee of \$1 per minute after 5:40 PM.

An early drop-off fee of \$5 per child will be charged to your account when a student who is not registered for Early Care is dropped off before 7:30.

A fee of \$25 will be charged for each returned check due to insufficient funds. After two returned checks, all payments must be made with a money order or cashier's check.

Field trips will be paid for on an individual basis. Many of the field trips we take are free and parents will only be charged for use of the bus(es), whether or not their child rides a bus. However, there will be others throughout the year, such as the Pumpkin Patch, Christmas Tree Farm, and Montgomery Zoo, that parents will be responsible for paying at the time of the trip. Field trips must be paid IN CASH (no checks) to your child's teacher. We secure group rates for our field trips. Therefore, if your child is a member of any organization or field trip destination to be visited, we cannot recognize memberships. Also, once you pay for your child to attend a field trip, we are unable to refund the amount of the field trip if your child should be unable to attend.

Calendar

An annual calendar of school closings and events will be available at the beginning of the new school year. This year, the WCM observes the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Columbus Day
President's Day	Veteran's Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day (and the day before and after)
Memorial Day	Christmas Holidays (Dec. 25-29)
Independence Day	

If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the weekday closest to the holiday will be taken (i.e., Friday will be taken for Saturday holidays, Monday will be taken for Sunday holidays).

Although public school closes for spring break and extended Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays, the WCM remains open for all children except for the days stated above. The WCM will be closed for one teacher in-service day before the summer term begins and at least two days prior to the new school year (specific dates will be posted on the WCM School Calendar).

Arrival and Departure

Parents/guardians must escort their children to and from the classroom daily. It is required by DHR regulations that you sign your child in and out at the classroom using your **full name**, not initials. Parents must sign their child out before picking them up at the gym or playground. Children will be released to parents from the playground only at the fence gate and will not be released to go to the parent's car unattended.

Please check information on the door, bulletin board, and cubbie daily. Teachers will often leave important information and other reminders on the clipboard for parents. The WCM office may also leave statements attached to the clipboard, so it is important to look for communications each day.

Please use great caution in getting children into and out of automobiles. Children may dart out into WCM traffic if not supervised carefully. **Never leave any child or baby**

unattended in the car at any time. Please bring your child in with you and always lock your car. Do not leave personal items, such as your purse in the car unattended.

Children are only released to the custodial parent, guardian or persons authorized in their file. A copy of court orders restricting a parent's right to pick up their child must be on file to deny pick up. Written authorization for persons other than legal guardians is required for pick up and proper photo identification (driver's license) must be provided.

Security System

For the safety of our students and staff, the WCM has keypad entry. All parents are provided a security code. Please do not give this code to anyone. All others picking up or bringing your child must check in at the office. ID is required for pick-up.

Meals and Snacks

Menus are posted on the bulletin board outside each classroom, on the parent board and on the website monthly. Parents will also receive a copy by way of email. Occasionally a minor change to the menu may occur. This will be noted on the posted menu. Children's food allergies are posted in each classroom and teachers take great care in serving food to children with food allergies.

The WCM provides two snacks and a lunch daily. The WCM does not serve breakfast and asks that parents not send breakfast food for their child to eat after arrival as this impacts other children in the room.

Parents must notify the WCM in writing of any food allergies and/or food restrictions. Children may bring their lunch. Please get approval from your teacher prior to bringing food into the class. There are many children with food allergies. If the infant uses powdered formula, the bottles must be prepared at home and brought to the school. When bringing your child's lunch and/or bottles, make sure they are clearly dated and marked with the child's name. Containers and bottles should be taken home daily.

Clothing

At least one seasonally appropriate outfit and pair of socks should be kept in your child's bag or cubbie at all times. Please mark EVERYTHING with your child's name.

Weather permitting, the children will play outside every day, so please dress your child in seasonally appropriate play clothes. Hats, gloves, and coats are needed in the winter. Children's footwear should be safe for walking, running and climbing. Flip-flops, sandals, Crocs, and fancy dress shoes **are not suitable** for safe play or learning to walk. **Please send children in tennis shoes and socks.**

Napping

Parents of Toddlers – 4's children will need to send a crib-sized sheet, blanket and pillow (or napmat) for sleeping. Parents will be asked to take these items home on Fridays to launder and return on Monday. Please mark EVERYTHING with your child's name. We provide bedding for the Nursery which is washed daily.

Outside Play

According to DHR guidelines, every child must go outside every day, weather permitting. DHR guidelines require that a child in school must be healthy enough to participate in the center's activities. Outside play is a center activity. We do not have the resources to keep a child inside while his/her class is outside.

Medications and Treatments

The WCM requires written authorization to administer any medication or medical treatment. This includes diaper rash cream, chapstick, vasoline, lotion, sunscreen, bug spray, etc. A Medical Release form must be filled out each week if any medication is to be given to your child while at school. The form expires on Friday of that week. Please apply sunscreen before dropping off at school.

There cannot be any medication (which also includes: lotion, sunscreen, chapstick, diaper rash cream, bug spray, etc.) left in your child's bag. This is a DHR violation.

Medication is kept in a locked cabinet in the child's classroom or in the office. Medication must be in its original container with dosage amounts and times to administer. WCM Staff will not administer medication that is not in its original container or medication that is not intended for children (cough drops, etc.). If medication requires measurement, parents must provide the dropper and/or measuring cup. We will not administer any medication that has to be rectally inserted. Parents may also come to the WCM to personally administer medication.

Illness

If your child develops symptoms of illness while at school, we will contact the people listed on your emergency form in the order that you have requested. Your child must be picked up within **one hour of contact**. After one hour, late pickup charges will apply.

If your child is sent home from school because of symptoms of illness, they **cannot return the next day without a doctor's note**. However, children will not be permitted to stay at school if still exhibiting fever, vomiting or diarrhea, even with a doctor's note.

It is important that all communicable illnesses be reported to the WCM. The goal of the WCM is to prevent the spread of illness. Parental cooperation is essential.

To protect the health of all children, the WCM follows the American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations for School Exclusion. Below is a list of the most common illnesses for which a child must be excluded:

- Fever of 100 degrees F or above - the child may return after 24 hours of **no fever without medication**.
- Diarrhea – 2 or more episodes - the child may return after 24 hours episode free.
- Vomiting – 2 or more episodes – the child may return after 24 hours episode free.
- Pink eye – the child may return after the condition is treated with a doctor's note.
- Rash with fever – the child may return once cleared by a physician with a doctor's note.

- Streptococcal pharyngitis (strep throat) – the child may return 24 hours after initial treatment and fever free with a doctor’s note.
- Viral or bacterial infections – the child may return after being treated and released by a physician with a doctor’s note.
- Ringworm – the child may return once treatment has begun. The area infected must remain covered at all times.

For a full list of conditions, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations for School Exclusion which can be found at:

<http://health.ocde.us/Assets/Health/AAP+Recommendations+for+Exclusion.pdf>

Injuries and Accidents

If a minor accident occurs, first aid measures will be taken and an Incident Form completed. A signed copy will be given to the parent/guardian and one placed on file. Parents/guardians will be called in the case of accidents that may need a doctor’s attention or injuries that need a parent/guardian to determine a course of action. If you should take your child to the doctor after an accident/injury that occurred at school, please inform the school as soon as possible.

In the event of serious accident, the child will be taken immediately to the hospital by ambulance. Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contacts will be called.

Birthdays

The WCM does not host birthday parties during the instructional day. Parents may send one special treat (small cupcakes or cookies) for the whole class if they wish for a child’s birthday. Please bring the treats during morning drop off and get prior approval from your child’s teacher or the office. There are many children with food allergies. If you are planning a private party outside of school for your child, you may send invitations home with the children only if the whole class is invited. Otherwise, we ask you to mail invitations or call parents individually. However, we cannot give out contact information.

Field Trips

Well-planned and carefully supervised field trips are an important part of a quality curriculum. Parents are encouraged to volunteer to chaperone field trips.

A Field Trip Authorization Form will be required for each trip. It is a DHR regulation that all children under 5 years old must ride in a **5 point latch car seat**. Children 5 years old AND weighing 40 pounds or more must ride in a booster seat. Children 6 years old and older may ride with the regular bus seat belt. Parents will bring car seats or booster seats on the day of field trips and strap the seats into the WCM bus. Please do not bring seats into the building unless the bus is not available when you arrive. Parents are encouraged to recommend places for age appropriate outings.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency Contact

Current emergency phone numbers for each child shall be kept on file so that a parent or designated emergency contact can be reached in the case of an emergency. It is important that parents report changes immediately to the office. In emergencies, we will contact the first person listed on your Emergency Contact form and if they are not immediately available, we will call the next person until someone is reached.

Emergency School Closing Information

Should the WCM have to close because of weather or other emergency situations, parents/guardians will be notified via email and cell phone by an automated service. It is **essential** that the correct email address and cell phone numbers are on file in the office. Please let the office staff know should your email address and/or cell phone number change throughout the year.

During times of inclement weather, parents can also watch for postings about school closings on local TV and radio stations. In most cases, the WCM will follow the Montgomery County Public School decision about closing.

Fire Safety

Fire drills are conducted monthly at different times during the day. Children are escorted out of the facility until an all-clear is sounded. An annual fire inspection keeps the facility current for fire safety.

Severe Weather Safety

A weather radio and severe weather warnings notify the WCM staff of severe weather conditions. When tornado sirens sound, all children are immediately escorted to the weather emergency area of the facility - the "safe hall". The Co-Directors monitor conditions and notifies WCM staff when it is safe to leave the safe area.

Parents are urged not to pick up their children during severe weather warnings. The WCM is an approved shelter and children are safer in the facility than in an automobile.

Attendance and Vacation Credits

Attendance

Children benefit from predictable routines. Regular attendance helps them gain the most from our program. Teachers encourage children to arrive on time, so they can fully participate in planned activities. Parents are urged not to pick children up during naptime.

Vacation Credits

Each student will be permitted two weeks of vacation credit per school year (August-August) at the rate of 50% off tuition. A school year is considered the first day of school in August through the day before the first day of school the following August. Students only attending in the summer will be permitted one week of vacation credit. A student must be absent the entire week to receive the vacation credit. A Vacation Credit Request Form must be filled out and turned in to the office staff at least one week in advance. Your request will be either approved or denied and given back to you. Credits

will not be applied unless a Vacation Credit Request Form is given in advance and the student is absent the entire week. If you have already used two weeks of vacation credit, your request will be denied. Vacation Credit Request Forms can be found by the Parent Board.

Advancement and Promotions

Children ages 3 and up are placed and advanced in accordance with public school policy based on their age on September 1 of that school year. Infants, Toddlers, and children under 3 are placed in age groups according to age at the time of enrollment and are advanced to the next class in January, June and/or August of each school year. Although this is the promotion schedule we strive to follow, there are times when a child will not be able to move up at the scheduled time. Based on circumstances, there may also be times when a child needs to be advanced at another time throughout the year. ALL promotions are based on the age of the child, development of the child, and space availability. Children will always attend a class that has been DHR certified for their age. (See DHR Child:Teacher Ratios on pg. 4 for classroom ages.)

We will not advance children beyond their age group. Children who advance early will have to repeat a year at some point before entering school. Generally, their social skills develop best by staying with their own age group. Teachers make every effort to individualize education to meet each child's needs.

When students move from one class to another grade level, the following is expected:
Nursery A to Nursery B – Begin offering baby food and items from our WCM food menu
Nursery B to TA – No bottles, start on sippy cups, and eating from WCM food menu
Toddler A to Toddler B – Move towards regular cups, giving up pacifier
Toddler B to 2's – No sippy cups, no pacifiers, begin potty training at school/home
Before entering K3 – Expected to be potty trained

Parent Communication

There is a Parent Board located outside the WCM Office with helpful information about the WCM. Please check the Parent Board often! The office staff communicates with parents/guardians via email and/or letters sent home with the children. We also have a Facebook page you can join to receive important information. The Parent Newsletter is sent via email during the school year, at the beginning of each month. The newsletter contains field trips, school closings, and special events. Please take the time to read this information so you will be aware of what is happening in the classrooms.

Teachers also communicate with parents via notes sent home with the children, posted on the sign in sheets, and/or posted on the bulletin boards located outside the classroom. A daily schedule, monthly menu, and weekly themes are also posted on the bulletin boards outside the classrooms.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to use email to communicate with the Director(s) and office staff when possible.

Parent Involvement

Periodically, the classes invite parents/guardians to come to the school for events and parties. Parents/guardians and grandparents are encouraged to attend. It is important that children feel the adults in their lives are interested in their education.

Potty Training

For successful potty training, a child must be physically, cognitively, and emotionally ready and must be able to indicate the need to go potty. Our teachers work with the family to help make potty training a relaxed and successful process that builds the child's self-confidence and self-esteem. Potty training usually begins around 24 months of age, but success is dependent on the readiness of the child. Children are expected to be toilet trained before they start attending a three-year-old class.

Biting

Biting is a common behavior of young children. Children bite for a variety of reasons. The teachers at Aldersgate WCM will work with parents to help identify the reason for the biting and a solution to help eliminate the behavior, so that the child may move quickly through this phase. Nursery and Toddler parents may be asked to sign a separate biting policy statement.

Child Guidance

Here at the WCM, we prefer a positive approach to managing children's behavior that is consistent with the developmental needs of children. The children are encouraged to develop self-control and to handle conflict in a peaceful and positive manner. Positive guidance includes prevention, redirection, positive encouragement and modeling.

The WCM does not permit ANY form of corporal punishment or force by any other child, teacher, staff member, or parent while in the facility or on the church premises. The following techniques are not permitted:

- Depriving of food, water, nap, or bathroom
- Using disrespect, shaming, blaming, intimidation, ridicule, or harsh language.

If there is a discipline problem we cannot solve, we will ask for assistance from the parent. The WCM reserves the right to dismiss a child whose behavior becomes so disruptive as to cause physical and/or emotional harm to other children or staff members.

Confidentiality

Parents and children have the right to expect that all information about their family is confidential. A child's behavior and development should be discussed only with his or her teachers and parents. A parent does not have the right to know who injured their child; they do have the right to know the circumstances and how both children were cared for and/or disciplined. Children's records are stored in a secure cabinet and computer files are password protected. Photographs will be used on the website or publicly only with parental consent. A media release form will be on record for each child.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child care providers are mandated by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Resources. The priority of the Center is to protect all children and maintain safety and well being.

Conferences

We are concerned about the round-the-clock experiences of the child in his/her home, school and community. We recognize our opportunity to cooperate with parents and to learn from them. All teachers and staff members are more than happy to talk with you about your child at any time, but please set up a time to meet with them outside the classroom. Although teachers love talking with you when you are picking up or dropping off your child, they are still in charge of taking care of their children. Rather than discussing issues in the class, please set up a time when you can meet together outside the classroom. We always strive to give the best attention to our children!

Grievances

The WCM takes parents' concerns very seriously. Should you have any concerns, we want to hear them and do everything we can to bring resolution! If you have a concern regarding the classroom or teacher, please set up a conference with the teacher to seek resolution. If, after meeting with the teacher, you are not satisfied with the results, please contact the Director(s).

If you have a concern regarding the school, please set up a conference with the Director(s). If you should have a concern regarding the Director(s) that cannot be resolved by meeting with the Director(s), please send a written grievance to the Aldersgate UMC Church Administrator.

Withdrawal and Termination of Services

Parents are expected to notify the WCM in writing **at least two weeks** in advance of withdrawing from the program. If notice has not been given, you will still be responsible for tuition for the two week notification period for full-time students.

The WCM may terminate services in the event of excessive:

- Late pick up by parents.
- Inappropriate behavior of parents.
- Requests for special accommodations the WCM cannot meet.
- Failure to pay tuition in a timely manner.
- Failure to comply with WCM policies concerning ill children.
- Failure to provide documentation.
- Failure to keep immunization records current.
- Failure to provide emergency contact updates.
- Behavior of the child that prevents the child from participating safely with peers or staff members.