

GRACE GARDEN

WHERE LOVE GROWS

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Saint John's United Methodist Church

Mission:

The goal of Grace Garden Child Development Center is to offer an invaluable educational experience for toddlers and pre-school children in a Christian environment. This experience will provide an atmosphere which will encourage development of the whole child physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

“Train children in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

WELCOME TO **GRACE GARDEN**

I am pleased that you have chosen Grace Garden as a place of learning for your child. Our goal is to provide opportunities and experiences that will help your child develop emotionally, cognitively, physically and spiritually.

We will provide a nurturing and supportive environment where children can learn through developmentally appropriate activities and feel confident in taking on new challenges. Our hands-on approach will enable your child to explore and create in ways that encourage the full use of his or her imagination.

Our loving and enthusiastic teachers bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to our program. They are dedicated to enriching the lives of children and strive for excellence in all they do.

Please know that our door is always open for you to stop by and share any ideas, questions or concerns. We look forward to a terrific year and getting to know your family better. Thank you for entrusting your child to our care.

Sincerely,

Kym Cooper
Director

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Grace Garden at St. John's United Methodist Church. We are honored that you have chosen to share a very special part of your child's growing-up season with us. For nearly sixty years, St. John's has been serving young children and their families through weekday children's ministry. We're pleased that your family has now found a place in that long and trustworthy tradition.

Grace Garden is committed to providing quality childcare for all children. Our loving and devoted teachers and staff are eager to provide for their care and development, and the church staff at St. John's shares that commitment.

If Grace Garden has been your first point of entry into St. John's, let me invite you to enter by other doors as well! St. John's is a community of faith where we like to say that "God's love changes people, and God's people change the world." If you do not presently have a church home, we'd be pleased to have you come for a visit. We worship on Sundays at 9 and 11 a.m. Children are welcome in our worship services, but quality childcare is also provided. Small groups for all ages, including children, gather at 9:55 a.m. on Sundays as well as throughout the week. These groups are wonderful opportunities for personal and spiritual growth, and also great ways to get to know other young parents and families.

I hope your family has a truly rewarding experience at St. John's. If we can be of any assistance in the course of the year, our door is always open.

May God bless your family's journey through Grace Garden.

Sincerely,

Rev. Paul Escamilla
Senior Pastor

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Grace Garden at Saint John's United Methodist Church. Thank you for sharing your child with us and giving us the privilege of sharing in their lives. It is our goal that every child that comes through our doors feels welcome, loved and supported. As Director of Children's Programming here at Saint John's, I am pleased to work together with our devoted and loving staff to nurture and strengthen each child's relationship with God.

Some of these opportunities for faith formation at Saint John's are available through children's Sunday school, music and mission; Vacation Bible School; and special family events during Advent, Lent and throughout the summer months. I would love to share more information about all the ways we are in ministry to children and families both within the church and in the larger community. If you have questions about any of our ministries please feel free to contact me by phone or email any time. With best wishes for a wonderful school year, I look forward to getting to know both you and your child.

Grace and Peace,

Tracy Burger
Director, Children's Programming

Dear Parents,

Children are blessings from God. And at Grace Garden, we want your child to know and feel that every time he or she walks through the front door.

As the school's Chapel Leader, I have the privilege of spending every Wednesday morning with your little "miracles," watching their eyes widen and their faith grow as they learn what it means to be children of God. Through lively praise music, prayer and a Bible lesson especially geared for them, they come to know about how much they are loved by God and how they were made special, each and every one.

My prayer is that your child will experience the awesome power of God's love at Grace Garden. As the mother of two Grace Garden alumni, I can tell you that my children grew in their faith here and are better citizens of the world for having been part of this wonderful school.

If you have questions about chapel or about any other ministries at Saint John's United Methodist Church, please feel free to call me or stop by chapel during the school year. I look forward to spending time with your child and being part of his or her spiritual life.

Blessings,

Sally Rodgers
Family Mission and Outreach Coordinator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Calendar	8
Registration/Withdrawal	9
Probationary Period	9
Tuition and Fees	10
Tuition Payments	10
Payment Penalties	10
Arrival	11
Departure	11
Before and After School Care	12
Weather	12
Discipline Policy	13
Medications	14
Medical Emergencies	14
Health	15
Snack	16
Lunches	17
Nutritional Lunch Ideas	18
Celebrations	19
Birthdays	19
Outside Play	20
Clothing	20
Toys	21
Labeling	21
Safety	21
Hearing and Vision Screening	22
Home Visits	22
Parent/Teacher Communication	22
Parent Information Board	23
Conferences	23
Parent Participation/Volunteers	23
Open Door Policy	24
Minimum Standards and Licensing Info	24
Music, Chapel, and Garden Time	24
Reporting Child Abuse	25
ABC's and 123's	26
Church Staff	27

2010-2011 CALENDAR

Grace Garden will generally follow the AISD schedule. Classes will be held Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and optional Fridays from 9:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Classes will begin on August 31, 2010 and conclude on May 26, 2011.

Grace Garden will be closed November 23-26 (Thanksgiving), December 17-31 (winter break), February 18 (AISD Holiday), April 22 (AISD Holiday), and March 15-18 (Spring Break).

IMPORTANT DATES

First Day of School August 31, 2010
Coffee Chat September 28, 2010
Coffee Chat November 9, 2010
Thanksgiving Feast November 18, 2010
Thanksgiving Break November 23–26, 2010
Breakfast with Santa December 11, 2010
Winter Break December 17-31, 2010
Daddy Daughter Dance February 10, 2011
Coffee Chat February 22, 2011
Spring Break March 15-18, 2011
Coffee Chat April 12, 2011
Easter Egg Hunt April 21, 2011
Easter Break April 22, 2011
Pre-K Graduation May 2011 (TBD)
Water Day May 19, 2011
Last Day of School May 26, 2011

REGISTRATION / WITHDRAWAL

With your child's application, a **non-refundable** registration fee and a **non-refundable** one month's tuition payment (May money) are due. Children are placed in classes according to their kindergarten entry age group, their age as of September 1st of the current year.

We hope that every child will spend the whole year with us. However, we realize that for various reasons, families may have to withdraw from the program. The Grace Garden pre-school program requires a **30-day written notice** before withdrawing from our program, or you will be charged for that month's tuition. Upon receiving your written notice, your pre-paid one month's tuition (May money) may be applied to cover your child's last month of attendance.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

All children will initially be enrolled in Grace Garden Child Development Center on a two-week trial basis. At the end of this time period, parents and staff will meet to decide if Grace Garden can adequately meet the needs of each child.

As children grow and learn, so do their needs. Therefore, if the Teacher and Director agree that a child's needs must be reevaluated, parents will be notified and the child will be put on probation during the evaluation period. A child may be put on probation at any point during his/her enrollment at Grace Garden CDC.

2010-2011 TUITION AND FEES

Registration \$125

Supply Fee \$75 per year

Monthly Tuition for 3 days/week \$285

Monthly Tuition for 4 days/week \$375

Waiting List Fee \$45

TUITION PAYMENTS

Your full tuition payment is due the first day of each month that your child is scheduled to attend our program. Families will receive a discount on each additional child enrolled in the program. No adjustments will be made for days missed and days cannot be exchanged or made up.

The tuition payment box is located on the wall in the back hallway by the parent information board. Checks, money orders, or bank drafts should be made payable to Grace Garden with your child's first and last name on your payment. Cash payments for tuition are discouraged.

PAYMENT PENALTIES

Any payment received after the 5th of each month will be charged a \$20.00 late fee. An additional \$5.00 per day will be added for each day after the 10th day of the month. There will be a service charge of \$35.00 on all returned checks. After the second returned check, in a calendar year, all tuition payments will be required to be made by money order.

ARRIVAL

Arrival time is 9:00 - 9:15 a.m. If your child is going to be late, please call ahead to the Grace Garden office at 371-5822, so that we may inform the teacher of his/her arrival. Parents are required to sign each child in and out every day. The sign-in sheets are located in each classroom. We are required by the Department of Family and Protective (DFPS) to keep these records of your child's attendance. Ill siblings should not be in the pre-school area at arrival or departure. Please make arrangements with a friend to watch the ill child. Do not leave unattended children in your car. Some children do experience separation anxiety at arrival. If this occurs, it is important to establish an arrival routine with your child and then leave the room quickly. **Staying in the room often makes the separation more difficult.**

DEPARTURE

Departure time is from 1:15-1:30 p.m. Any time someone other than parents will be picking up a child, the Grace Garden office **MUST BE NOTIFIED** in person by calling and speaking with the Director. Any person picking up a child must be authorized in writing. At 1:30 p.m. Grace Garden closes. Any remaining children will go to room #102, where a staff member will wait with them until a parent arrives. **There is a late charge of \$1 for each minute starting at 1:30. You must pay the late fee at time of late pick up.** Please make a check payable to Grace Garden. If there is an emergency, please call the Grace Garden office at 371-5822. You will still be responsible for any late payment.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Each day Grace Garden is in session, limited before-and after-school child care will be available in room 102. Before-school care begins at 8:30 a.m. each day. At 9:00 a.m. children are escorted to their classrooms. After school care begins immediately at 1:30pm, and the children are again escorted to Room 102 from their classroom. After school care lasts until 2:00 p.m. sharp. Both services are an extra \$5.00 per day, per visit, whether it is in the morning or afternoon. Please note that this is strictly childcare, which means we set no curriculum, and age groups are combined.

WEATHER

Grace Garden will follow AISD's plan of opening during severe weather. Closing the center will be at the discretion of the Director. In the event that AISD has a delayed opening, Grace Garden will open one (1) hour later than AISD.

Children **cannot** legally be in care at any licensed facility without a working phone. If telephone service is interrupted, we will close the center. If the electricity goes out during the school hours, we will close the center if power cannot be restored in one hour.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The word "discipline" is from the root word "disciple" and truly means "to teach." We take our policy directly from the guidelines set by NAEYC (the National Academy for the Education of Young Children). Grace Garden uses a positive approach to discipline by helping children understand age-appropriate behavior. Teachers help the children to develop self-discipline or inner control over their actions by setting limits, redirecting the children when necessary, using patience, love and understanding, and by talking about the acceptable ways of handling situations as they arise.

Teachers will set clear, consistent and fair limits. Teachers will anticipate and eliminate potential problems, redirecting children to a more appropriate behavior or activity. Teachers will listen and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations and respond with respect. Teachers will encourage appropriate behavior, patiently reminding children of rules and their rationale as needed. Teachers will assign logical or natural consequences in problem situations. Children who are actively involved are rarely discipline problems. If a child is behaving in an inappropriate or unsafe manner, the teacher will attempt to redirect. If the behavior continues, the child will be asked to sit in an area where he/she can watch the activities but not participate for a limited amount of time. During this time, the teacher will discuss the behavior with the child. If the behavior persists, the child will be escorted to the Director's office. The Director may then call a parent to ask for assistance in dealing with the situation. Teamwork between family and school is imperative in helping children learn appropriate behaviors.

It is our hope that the Grace Garden staff and parents will establish a relationship that will foster close communication and support in dealing with all aspects of a child's behavior. Grace Garden will call a conference with the parents if a child does not respond to our discipline efforts. We reserve the right to request a professional consultation for a child and/or withdrawal of a child who cannot adapt to this group environment after repeated attempts to resolve behavior issues.

MEDICATIONS

No medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, will be administered to any child by the Grace Garden staff. Do not put medication in bottles or juice cups. Sunscreen should be applied before arrival by a parent, and cannot be left in a child's bag. Please do not send Blistex or Chapstick to school with your child.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

If Grace Garden staff believes your child needs emergency medical care we will call 911.

HEALTH

Health policies for Grace Garden are developed from guidelines set by the State of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the Health Department. If your child contracts any illness diagnosed by a doctor as a contagious disease, please notify the office so that other parents can be alerted. Your child's privacy will be protected.

After any surgery a child may be readmitted with a doctor's release 24 hours after the surgery if the child is fully able to participate in all activities.

<u>DISEASE</u>	<u>RE-ADMISSION</u>
Chicken Pox*	after 7 days and all blisters healed
Conjunctivitis	note from physician
Hepatitis*	after one week from onset of illness
Impetigo*	after treatment for sores
Head Lice	after medicated shampoo treatment and confirmed nit free from the office prior to returning to the room
Measles*	after 4 days from rash outbreak

Mumps* 9 days after swelling began

Pertussis*
(whooping cough) after 5 days of antibiotics

Strep 24 hours after antibiotics

*Reportable Disease Form must be completed before re-admission.

Parents must keep their child home when their child:

- Gives evidence of a fresh cold or sinus infection
- Has sore or discharging eyes
- Has an unexplained rash
- Has had vomiting, diarrhea, or fever within 24 hours.

CHILDREN MAY RETURN TO CLASS IF THEY HAVE BEEN FREE OF ALL SYMPTOMS/FEVER FOR 24 HOURS WITHOUT THE AID OF MEDICATION.

SNACK

Parents will alternate providing **NUT-FREE** snacks for their child's classroom. A monthly calendar of the snacks will be posted on the bulletin board in each classroom. Detailed information will be provided regarding snack rotations at the beginning of the school year by the classroom Room Parent.

LUNCHESES

Grace Garden CDC serves children with life-threatening allergies to peanuts and tree nuts. Please be mindful of this when packing lunch for your child(ren). Please do not send your child(ren) with any foods that contain peanuts or tree nuts, or foods that have been processed in factories that also process nut products.

Grace Garden is committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the early childhood experience. Not only do children benefit physically, but they are also learning the principles of good nutrition. Our center does not provide lunches to the children. Parents are responsible for meeting the nutritional value and for meeting the child's daily food needs.

We appreciate your cooperation in sending non-perishable foods in your child's labeled lunch container. Please include milk, 100% natural fruit juice, or water as your child's beverage. Metal rimmed containers (ex. Fruit cups, Vienna sausages) are prohibited because of the sharp edge.

Bottles, pacifiers, cups and all lunch and snack containers must be labeled with the child's first and last name.

Please be aware of food-related choking in young children. Grapes, hot dogs, apples, popcorn and carrots are all potential dangers. If you do send these foods in your child's lunch, be sure to cut them into small pieces.

For your convenience, we have included a list of nutritional lunch ideas.

NUTRITIONAL LUNCH IDEAS

Fresh fruit: oranges, grapefruit, tangerine, or apple wedges (peeled for younger children), pineapple chunks, banana slices, seedless grapes (cut in quarters lengthwise for toddlers and twos), seedless watermelon chunks cantaloupe or other melons. Try apple wedges with cheese spread, fruit kabobs (use spaghetti noodles instead of a toothpick), peaches, pears, plums, strawberries or kiwi slices.

Dried Fruit: apricots, banana chips, prunes stuffed with cream cheese, cranberries, raisins, apples and pineapples.

Vegetables: carrots (cooked and cubed for little ones), celery (stuffed with cream cheese and raisins), cucumber slices, cherry tomatoes (cut in quarters for toddlers and twos), or fresh, canned or cooked zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower, peas, corn or green beans. Add ranch or other salad dressings for dipping vegetables. Try using a variety of cutting techniques to give vegetables an appealing appearance.

Proteins: hard boiled eggs (peeled), pieces of turkey, chicken, ham, or beef (sliced or cubed), cubes or slices of natural cheese (string cheese is a favorite among preschoolers), cream cheese, pimento cheese, or tuna.

Grains: bagels, natural fruit bars, rice cakes, bread sticks, tortillas, crackers, sandwich bread (spread with protein), unsweetened cereal, seeds or popcorn (not for toddlers or twos), Goldfish, or pasta (with or with out sauce).

CELEBRATIONS

Our center will have special celebrations throughout the school year. In keeping with our good nutrition policy, candy and foods high in sugar, salt, fat and preservatives are not permitted. DFPS requires that all food items must be prepared/purchased at a commercial store.

Please do not push teachers for a "party". Young children in group care do not benefit from over-stimulation. Goodie bags with candy or cookies are not permitted to be passed out by classmates as part of a celebration.

BIRTHDAYS

Simple recognition is given to each child on his/her birthday. If you wish to bring a special birthday snack, please coordinate this with your child's teacher. This is not intended to be a birthday party for your child. (No decorations, party hats, balloons, etc.) You may bring your child's favorite fruit, vegetable or healthy muffins to share. Do not bring "sugary" snacks or traditional birthday cupcakes. **DPRS requires that all food items must be prepared/purchased at a commercial store.**

Please check with your child's teacher or the Grace Garden office for suggestions and allergies. No gifts are to be exchanged, but the honoree's family may donate a hard-cover book to the classroom to commemorate the occasion. If you bring invitations to a birthday party inside the building, there must be one for every child in your child's room. If that is the case, you may place one in each child's folder.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Children will go outside every day unless it is raining or the wind chill is freezing or below. This means that on cold days, children should wear warm outside clothes. Children should bring a water bottle labeled with child's first name and last initial to school every day so they can stay hydrated while on the playground. Water is the best drink since juice attracts bees.

Before returning to school after an illness, your child needs to be well enough to play outside.

CLOTHING

Children should be dressed in comfortable, washable play clothes every day for all activities. Clothing should be simple enough for the child to manage alone. Please keep in mind that clothes will be subjected to paint, glue, the playground, etc. Shirts should cover the child's mid-drift. Please be sure that your child's shoes fit correctly. Poor fitting shoes may inhibit your child's physical development. Please do not send your child in western boots, sandals, or flip flops as they are inappropriate for pre-school activities. Sneakers or tennis shoes are best for climbing, playing and going on field trips.

Please do not allow your child to wear dangling jewelry (necklaces, earrings, etc.), as it may be a safety/choking hazard.

All children should have an extra set of weather appropriate clothing in a Ziploc bag clearly labeled with the child's name. Parents must furnish disposable diapers and/or training pants as well as wipes for children not yet potty trained. The Pre-K classroom is not set up for diaper changing.

TOYS

Children should leave toys at home. Valued possessions from home can cause problems with sharing and may be lost or broken. Any items brought from home will be put away, at the teacher's discretion, until dismissal time. Toy weapons such as, but not limited to, swords, guns, knives, and light sabers should never be brought to Grace Garden.

LABELING

Please label all clothing and items that your child brings (including coats, lunch kit items, etc.) with your child's first name and last initial.

SAFETY

Every effort is made to safeguard your child and to provide a happy and healthy environment for your child. We have specific written guidelines regarding fire and emergency procedures. Our entire staff is professionally trained in First Aid and CPR to handle medical emergencies. Our building is equipped with a fire alarm system, fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide detectors, smoke detectors, and evacuation route maps. Annual inspections are conducted in accordance with licensing requirements. In addition to classroom instructions, a school-wide fire drill is performed monthly. Inclement weather drills are also performed every six months. In the event that our building must be evacuated, the children will be taken to the Youth House located across Wynona at 5908 Wynona Avenue.

HEARING AND VISION SCREENING

All children who are four years of age as of September 1 must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems prior to the start of the spring semester. Proof of this screening must be turned in to the Grace Garden office **before the start of the spring semester.**

HOME VISITS

To introduce your child to her/his teacher, a visit to your home will be scheduled in August. Children in all classes will be included in home visits. This is your child's time with the teacher. The teacher is interested in seeing the types of toys and play equipment that your child likes. The teacher will ask the child to show her/his room, or backyard, and will spend time visiting with the child. Due to time constraints, visits should last only about 15-20 minutes. Any parent concerns are to be discussed in private on the phone or in person at another time, not during home visits.

PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Please inform your child's teacher of any changes in your daily routine (such as a family illness, move to a new home, addition of sibling, death or a separation) which might affect your child's day at Grace Garden. Teachers will send home a written report each day for the younger children and weekly report for the older children. For your information, lesson plans and the daily schedule are posted in each classroom.

PARENT INFORMATION BOARD

We try to keep parents informed of our many activities. Information is posted on the bulletin board in the Grace Garden hallway. Also, please check your child's folder daily for information.

CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences for all children will be scheduled in the fall and spring semesters. However, parents or teachers may request a conference anytime there is a need.

PARENT PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERS

Parent participation is required. Parents and teachers are working in a partnership for the best development of each child. We have many ways parents can volunteer in our program. Before the school year begins you will receive volunteer forms. The sign-up is first-come, first-serve. If you are unable to fulfill your commitment, you may opt to pay a fee of \$55.00/semester so that we can contract another individual to fulfill those duties.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Communication between parents and Grace Garden staff is always encouraged. If parents have a question or concern, the Director will make every effort to be available immediately. **We do ask that discussions with teachers be scheduled for times when no children will be in the classroom (even the child concerned). It is best for all of our children if we keep adult conversations between adults, and reserve class time for class.** A classroom email address will be given to you at the beginning of the year for email communications with your child's teacher.

MINIMUM STANDARDS AND LICENSING INFORMATION

Parents may review a copy of minimum standards and our most recent Licensing inspection report during hours of operation. This information is also available online at www.dfps.state.tx.us. The phone number for the local licensing office is (512) 834-3195.

MUSIC, CHAPEL, AND GARDEN TIME

Each week, children attend special enrichment times in music, Chapel, and gardening. Chapel is held in the Saint John's sanctuary. The children learn Bible stories through songs and other activities. We focus on a central theme of God's love for children.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse and neglect are against the law in Texas, and so is failure to report it. If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required to report it to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or to a law enforcement agency. To report suspected abuse, call the abuse and neglect hotline at 1-800-252-5400.

ABC'S AND 123'S

Many parents are concerned when their children aren't practicing letters and numbers. They feel that completing paper and pencil exercises will most effectively prepare their children for elementary school.

We could give your children workbooks. We could make them memorize the alphabet. We could drill them. We could test them. But if we do, your children may lose something very important.

Children who are rushed into reading and writing too soon miss important steps in learning and may suffer later on because they lack the foundation they need for using language. Children who are taught to read before they are ready may be able to sound out and recognize words, but they may also have little understanding of what they are reading. If they haven't been given time to play, they won't have explored objects enough to know what words (like "hard, harder, hardest") mean. If they aren't allowed to string beads, button, dress up, cut, paste, pour, and draw, they won't develop the small muscle skills they need for writing.

Because math involves more than memorizing facts (like $2+2=4$) and because it involves logical thinking, children shouldn't be pushed into paper and pencil arithmetic too soon. To acquire the foundation for logical thinking, children need many opportunities to count objects, sort them into piles, and add some to a pile and take some away. It is by playing games like these that they learn to truly understand addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication. Without these concrete experiences, children may give correct answers but probably won't understand what they are doing and why.

If children are rushed into academic subjects too soon, they may lose their enthusiasm for learning and lose their sense of themselves as learners. If children are told what to learn and memorize by their teacher, they may become more passive and dependent learners, and be less excited about learning something new. Children who are given plenty of time to play, however, learn to ask their own questions and figure out their own answers. They are responsible for their own learning. They see themselves as explorers, discoverers, problem solvers, and inventors.

CHURCH STAFF

Paul Escamilla	Senior Pastor
Georjean Renquist	Associate Pastor
Pat Thomas	Pastoral Visitor
John Anderson	Certified Lay Minister
Jim Newman	Lay Leader
Sally Rodgers	Family Mission and Outreach
Tracy Burger	Director of Children's Programming
Valerie Vogt	Student Ministries
Julie Sieverman	Business Administrator
Daniel Sena	Maintenance Supervisor
Joaquin Martinez	Custodian

Kym Cooper Preschool Director

Saint John's United Methodist Church 452-5737

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