

The  
**Mustard Seed**  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church



## Parent Handbook

2016-2017

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## 2016-2017 Mustard Seed Staff

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# **THE MUSTARD SEED**

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

**2016-2017**

### **I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

**A. OUR MISSION STATEMENT** – The Mustard Seed is a ministry of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church whose goal is to provide young children, ages 18 months through 3 years, with a safe, loving and developmentally appropriate environment in which to explore God’s world and to experience his love.

### **B. LICENSING AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

St. Luke’s Episcopal Church’s Mustard Seed Program is in the process of obtaining licensing by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS).

### **C. ADMISSIONS/ WITHDRAWAL PROCESS**

#### **ADMISSION**

**All children, both new and those re-enrolling, must apply for admission to The Mustard Seed annually.** Students are enrolled in the following order:

- Current students
- Siblings of current students
- Parishioners of St. Luke’s Church who have been active for 6 months or longer
- New applicants (The Director will make final decisions regarding acceptance)

In order to secure placement a non-refundable registration fee must accompany the registration form. See Tuition and Fees below.

The Mustard Seed seeks to welcome all children as God’s unique and treasured creations and is open to children of every race, color, religion, nationality or ethnic origin.

#### **WITHDRAWAL/DISMISSAL**

Should a parent decide to withdraw their child from The Mustard Seed, the parent should:

- Inform the Director two weeks prior to the desired withdrawal date
- Prepare to pay 100% of the following month’s tuition.
- Any special circumstances concerning withdrawal should be discussed with the Director. At the Director’s discretion, the payment of the following month’s tuition may be waived.

The Mustard Seed reserves the right to dismiss children for non-payment of tuition, or in the event that a child cannot participate successfully in the program. The Director will contact the parents should such a circumstance arise.

#### **D. TUITION AND FEES**

- A **Registration Fee of \$125** must accompany the registration form and is non-refundable.
- The **Supply and Activity Fee**: Fall supply fee is due by May 8<sup>th</sup> and spring supply fee by September 6<sup>th</sup>. The fee for the toddler class is \$200 per semester and the fee for the older 2's class is \$250 per semester.
- **Tuition for the 2-day program is \$216 per month and for the 4-day program is \$432 per month.**

**Tuition is due and payable at the beginning of each month.** Following the enrollment payment, which includes September's tuition, subsequent payments are due and must be received by the 10th of each month.

#### **E. CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

The Mustard Seed strives to provide a developmentally appropriate early childhood experience that allows each child to grow emotionally, cognitively, socially, spiritually and physically in a loving atmosphere.

The Mustard Seed uses the Pinnacle Faith Based Curriculum.

The classrooms are bright, cheerful and very conducive to early learning. Our children will have the opportunity to explore their environment and to interact in a group setting.

The children attend chapel on Thursdays. Chapel is planned and led by Ann Allen, the Director of Children and Family Ministries at St. Luke's Church. Children will have the opportunity to hear that 'God loves them!' through the use of prayer, song, and Bible stories.

We strive to provide the children of The Mustard Seed many opportunities for personal and social growth. Since young children learn best by being able to explore and actively engage all of their senses, a variety of learning centers will be available to them. They will be exposed to daily music, circle time, and scheduled group activities. The learning centers, as well as other daily activities, will be an opportunity for the children to refine their fine and gross motor skills.

#### **F. FACULTY**

The Mustard Seed teachers strive to provide each child with the love and attention so important in building confidence and creating a positive self-image. Our teachers are required to complete 24 hours of professional development each year. All of our teachers have had a background check. In addition, all Mustard Seed staff receives training in a program entitled Safeguarding God's Children as required by the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. CPR and First Aid certification is also provided.

#### **G. CONFERENCES**

The Mustard Seed does not schedule formal teacher conferences but if at any time you have comments or questions about any aspect of your child's day at The Mustard Seed, we encourage you to contact the Director to arrange a conference time.

## II. PROGRAM POLICIES

### A. COMMUNICATION

Messages regarding school news will either be sent to your email or home address. **Should your email address or home address change during the school year, please contact the Director with the updated address.** A newsletter will be e-mailed at the end of each week to inform you of what is going on in your child's classroom the following week. Please check your child's bag daily. Teachers may place artwork or other information in your child's bag.

### B. DISCIPLINE

Your child deserves the most positive early childhood experience possible. Our philosophy is used school wide but may vary somewhat because teacher's expectations of the children may change as the child grows and develops socially. If a behavioral issue does occur we feel children should be treated fairly and with consistency.

We will use the following strategies to reinforce desired behavior:

- Verbal Praise
- Positive Reinforcement

If a child is not experiencing success in the classroom, these strategies will be used:

- **Ignoring** - Sometimes the child wants extra attention. If he/she doesn't receive the attention, the behavior usually goes away.
- **Redirecting** - The child will be diverted to another activity to keep the situation from becoming worse.
- **Verbal Warning** - The teacher will discuss with the child the inappropriate behavior and explain the 'logical' consequence to his/her action.
- **Think it over** - The child may be separated from the class and given time to calm down and think about the choices they are making. The child is never moved to a secluded area but is kept nearby so they can continue to be monitored by the teacher.
- **Parent contact** - In the case of persistent inappropriate behavior the parents will be contacted. If a child continues to be disruptive or of danger to the other children we will document all the effort taken by the staff to help the child experience success and then call a conference with the parents. **Only if necessary** would the school require that a child be withdrawn.

### C. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE AND POLICY

- In the event that a grievance or complaint needs to be made, it is in the interest of all concerned that a fair, timely, and reasonable approach is exercised in order to address and resolve the matter.
- Matters are best addressed when in written form; however, in certain instances a verbal complaint may need to be transcribed by the recipient of the complaint (i.e., the Director).
- The Director is the initial reviewer and should resolve the matter with respect to its urgency and importance.
- If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, the person having the concern may take the matter to the Director of Children and Family Ministries to act as mediator.

### D. OFFICE/SCHOOL HOURS

The Mustard Seed Office hours are **8:00 am – 1:00 pm Tuesday-Friday**, unless otherwise specified. You can contact the office by e-mailing Catherine Landis at [mustardseed@stlukes-sa.net](mailto:mustardseed@stlukes-sa.net) or by leaving a voicemail at 210-828-6425, ext. 224.

## E. CALENDAR

We use the AHISD and St. Luke's Episcopal school calendars to create the Mustard Seed calendar for the year. You will receive a school calendar that will list important calendar dates. You will also find information announcing special events or details pertaining to particular classes in the weekly newsletter, through email or through notes sent home from your child's teacher. It is important that you go through and clean out your child's bag daily.

## F. DROP OFF/ PICK UP PROCEDURES

*Parents please give this information to everyone you have authorized to drop off or pick up your child!*

The Mustard Seed program begins at 8:30 AM and ends at 12:30 PM. Children may be dropped off before 8:30 (beginning at 7:45 AM) but parents must register separately for this option (see Early Drop Off below). Each child will need to be walked into their classroom or the early care room, wash their hands, and be signed in. Always make sure that a teacher or assistant receives your child.

To ensure the safest possible environment for our Mustard Seed children and for the students of St. Luke's Episcopal School, the doors to the building will be locked for the majority of the day. These, then, are the procedures for arriving and leaving the building:

- **We ask that all Mustard Seed families enter and leave through the double glass doors under the porte-cochere on the north side of the building.**
- For Early Drop Off (beginning at 7:45 AM): Doors will be unlocked until 8:00 AM. After 8:00 AM you may ring the doorbell near the double glass doors. Tell the person that you are with The Mustard Seed.
- For Regular Drop Off (8:30 AM): The double glass doors will be locked, so enter by ringing the doorbell.
- For Pick Up (12:30 PM): Ring the doorbell. Person/s picking up children will sign them out in their classrooms.

*No person, other than those indicated on enrollment information, will be allowed to pick up a child unless a parent specifically informs the Director.*

## G. EARLY DROP-OFF

Early drop-off is offered from 7:45 AM until 8:30 AM. **Parents must register their child for Early Drop Off by semester.**

A minimum of four children must be enrolled in order for the program to be offered. The fee is \$40 per month and can be paid monthly or by the semester.

## H. SCHOOL CLOSINGS - INCLEMENT WEATHER

During inclement weather please listen to the radio or watch the news. We will abide by the Alamo Heights School District decision on school closings. Inclement weather days are not 'made up' at The Mustard Seed.

## I. VISITING THE SCHOOL

Parents are welcome to come visit The Mustard Seed classrooms at any time. Please understand that school hours are not a good time to try to conference with your child's teacher as she has a classroom of children who require her full attention! **You may make an appointment with the Director at any time throughout the school year (see: Conferences).**

## J. HEALTH

We are required by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to have current medical information for each child on **paper forms and on file at enrollment**. This should reflect an annual physical examination for each student. Because **fever** is often a sign of a communicable disease, **we ask that you not return your child to school until 24 hours after the fever has passed. Please do not give your child a dose of medicine and bring them to school! The child's temperature needs to come down on its own before returning to the classroom.**

When a child has a fever of 100 degrees or higher or other symptoms of illness such as (rash, infectious runny nose, vomiting, diarrhea, general discomfort) while at school, the parents will be notified. Parents need to make arrangements for their child to be picked up immediately. **Please, do not bring a sick child to school hoping they might feel better later.**

Medications will be administered to a child only under the following conditions:

- Medications must be in the **original prescription bottle with the label intact**. (Pharmacies will provide extra bottles on request.)
- Instructions must be written on the Dispensing Medication Authorization Form and will need to include the date and time to be administered, physician's name and expiration date. The Medication Dispensing Form will need to be **signed by the parent/guardian**.
- Outdated medication will be disposed of if not claimed by the parents.
- Parents must personally hand the medication to the Director.

Please do not send any medications in school bags! Student records for medications dispensed will be kept in student files.

**Children who have been prescribed antibiotics for contagious illness such as strep throat, tonsillitis, bronchitis or pneumonia should not return to school until they have been on the medication a minimum of 24 hours.**

If your child has a food allergy, please make sure the church office and teacher are aware of it immediately.

The teachers will follow basic first aid procedures for injuries and notify parents of any accidents requiring first aid at school through a written accident report and/or phone call. Should further emergency action be needed beyond first aid, there will be an immediate attempt to contact the parent. We will also call the child's physician and EMS, if needed. The school is required to keep a consent form in each child's file. **It is for the benefit of your child that you keep the church current on any changes in phone numbers, place of employment or other emergency numbers.**

## K. ACCIDENTS

All accidents will be reported immediately to the Director. Any time a child is injured or hurt on church property a report is written by the staff member who witnessed the incident. The original copy of the report goes home with the Parent/guardian (with a written explanation) and must be signed by the parent and returned to the church office.

## L. EVACUATION PROCEDURES/FIRE DRILLS

The Mustard Seed will participate with St. Luke's Episcopal Church and School in monthly fire drills. The Mustard Seed also has a procedure and protocol in the event of a "lock down" and will follow the same procedure as St. Luke's Church and School. Should an emergency arise which necessitates evacuation of the building, The Mustard Seed will follow the same protocol as St. Luke's Church and School where children will be taken to Alamo Heights Presbyterian Church located at 6201 Broadway.

### III. FAMILY SUPPORT AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### A. PARENT VOLUNTEERS

One of The Mustard Seed's strengths is the great interest our parents show in the success of their child's learning experience and the success of the program. Parents are invited to choose among several activities throughout the year. Some of these activities are: Room Parents, Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Party, Easter Party and Fiesta Celebration. There is truly some way for everyone to contribute! There will be sign-up opportunities at the beginning and throughout the year.

#### B. BIRTHDAYS

Your child's birthday is a very special milestone in their lives! The teachers will make a special crown for your child and your child will be recognized with singing and a special prayer during that week's Thursday Chapel. You are welcome to come to chapel and to visit your child's classroom on their birthday. Please let the Director know in advance if you would like to bring a special snack since we do have a few restrictions based on nutrition and safety guidelines. If your child has a summer birthday, please feel free to make arrangements with your child's teacher and with the Director.

Please let the Director know in advance if you plan to do something special for your child's birthday at school. Because of the age of our students we are restricted on nutrition and safety guidelines so these will need to be approved. We also ask that no favors be sent to the classroom. If your child has a summer birthday arrangements will be made by the teacher to celebrate a birthday on a day convenient for everyone. **Please, do not send invitations with your child to 'away-from-school' parties.**

#### C. SNACKS

The Mustard Seed will provide a daily snack. Please contact the Director if you have any questions or concerns.

#### D. LUNCHES

Children will bring their own lunches. Please be aware that:

- All water bottles and sippy cups will need to be labeled with your child's first and last name. If the drink needs to stay cool, please place an ice pack in your child's lunch box. We will not have access to a refrigerator.
- Please be sure to pack two drinks for the day. One to have in the classroom and one to have with lunch.
- We do not have enough refrigerator space to keep lunches in the refrigerator so please pack them with ice packs to keep food cold.
- We are unable to warm food so please pack food that does not need to be warmed.
- Please provide any utensils your child may need to eat their lunch.
- We cannot force the children to eat, so please send food you know they like! When planning your child's lunch, be aware that children do enjoy a variety of offerings.
- Please label all cups, food storage, and lunch boxes with your child's first and last name.

## E. CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable clothing for active, creative, play. **For our mobile students tennis shoes provide the best ground support for children at play.** Sandals, crocs, dress shoes and boots can create problems for young children whose large motor skills are still developing, especially during outside play and during other active play.

**Please provide a complete change of clothes (including socks) labeled with your child's name, in a zip lock bag (also labeled with your child's name) to be kept in the classroom at all times. Also provide an extra pair of shoes.** Please listen to the early morning weather forecasts as the weather turns cool. **All removable clothing (sweaters, jackets, hats, etc.) and other personal items (backpacks, lunchboxes) need to be labeled with your child's full name.**

## F. TOYS

With the exception of a special "lovey" please refrain from allowing your child to bring toys from home as these may become lost or at the very least cause "sharing conflicts"! If a special exception needs to be made, please notify your child's teacher and make sure all personal items are clearly marked with your child's name.

**St. Luke's Mustard Seed Program is obtaining licensing through the**

**Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**

**PO Box 23990**

**San Antonio, TX 78223-0990**

**(210) 304-3885**

**[www.dfps.state.tx.u](http://www.dfps.state.tx.u)**

**Parent Handbook Agreement**  
**St. Luke's Episcopal Church Mustard Seed Program**  
**2016-2017**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with all the policies and procedures set forth in The Mustard Seed Parent Handbook.

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_