**PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Reisterstown United Methodist Nursery School**

246 Main Street

Reisterstown, Maryland 21136

\*\*Please read this handbook in its entirety\*\*

**Philosophy:**

We are happy that you and your child have decided to be a part of our exciting preschool program. We will help your child to develop a strong sense of self and positive feelings about school. Our goal is to help each child experience the joy of learning and the wonders of his or her world. Our program is a developmentally appropriate, language based integrated curriculum. We provide a loving, nurturing and child-centered environment. Since our preschool is set in a Christian environment, religious stories, songs, and prayers will be included in the curriculum.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:**

Admissions to Reisterstown United Methodist Nursery School are made without regard to race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, or gender.

**School Hours:**

Full Day 3’s and 4’s Program: 7:30am-5:30pm

Half Day Program 2’s, 3’s or 4’s Program: 9:00am-12:00pm Doors open at 8:50am

**School Personnel**

Ms. Kirstyn Hutchinson– Director– 410-387-9911 (cell) or rumnsdirector@hotmail.com

Mrs. Lani Hoffmann – Registrar– 443-996-9375 (cell) or RUMNS234@gmail.com

Mrs. Nicole Brennan-2’s Teacher- 443-904-1193 (cell) or ladybugg82@gmail.com

Ms. Kirstyn Hutchinson-3’s/After Care Teacher- 410-387-9911 (cell) or RUMNSdirector@hotmail.com

Mrs. Lani Hoffmann-4’s/ Before Care Teacher- 443-996-9375 (cell) or RUMNS234@gmail.com

**Arrival/Departure**

**Please note that there is 1 drop off and 1 pick-up permitted per day. You may not pick your child up and return later as this can change staffing requirements and put us out of compliance.**

**ARRIVAL PROCEDURES**

 Families will wait in line at the red door for drop off. Keep your child with you and

do not allow them to run around or to play on the playground. Line up on the driveway

side of the shed, and please follow sidewalk markings. Door drop off is much less

stressful on the child, and allows for a quicker adjustment time once inside.

**FULL DAY EARLY DROP OFF**: Please ring the buzzer and wait patiently for someone to come to the door. Repeatedly ringing the bell may delay staff in getting to the door as we will need to go back and turn it off before coming to the door. You may drop off your child anytime after 7:30am. Be conscious that if you are later in your drop off and a line is forming, then you must wait in line with others. It does not give you a ticket to the front of the line.

**HALF DAY PRESCHOOL**: You will leave your child with the staff member at the door. Doors will be opened from 8:50 -9:00 am for drop off. CLASS STARTS AT 9AM and teachers will be in rooms. Leaving the room to answer the door puts us out of compliance with childcare ratios. If your child is arriving late, please let us know in advance. Children will only be admitted after 9 with a note from a doctor, dentist, or physical, mental health, or behavioral service provider.

**DISMISSAL PROCEDURES:**

Children may only go home with a parent or other designated person listed on

the emergency information. If your child is to go home with someone other than

those listed (such as a playdate), we are required to be notified in writing of the change.

Your child’s pick-up person must have a valid PHOTO ID to present at the door each

time. No child will be released to any person under the age of 16. Please be sure they

understand that it is not always the same person at the door for dismissal and it may be

necessary to show your ID at any time.

Maryland licensing requires that all children be signed-in and signed-out every day.

If your child is coming to school with carpool, grandparent, etc, please be sure to

instruct them on drop off and dismissal procedures.

**PRESCHOOL PICK UP:** Please wait in line as at drop off. Start line at the red door, and line up in the alley. Please be courteous and patient. Children will be called in the order of the pick-up person in line. Please be on time. Late fees will be assessed if someone is not there when the line is finished. (See LATE POLICY below)

**AFTERCARE PICK UP:** Pick up person must come to the door and ring the buzzer for pick up. Please give a few minutes for coats, backpacks, etc. to be gathered. Children will be brought to the door for pick up and someone is required to sign the child out. Children must be picked up no later than 5:30pm.

Parents must park in the large main parking lot. Do not park in the alleyway by our classroom door as we are using this for drop off and pick up and it is otherwise reserved for maintenance vehicles and the owners of the building next door. **Please do not use this alley or the space in front of the salon to pull in and drop off or pick up a child. If you park here to pick up, you will be asked to move your vehicle before we release your child, possibly incurring late fees.**

**Late Policy**

Please make every attempt to be on time picking up your child. While our day is extended, our staffing is based on enrollment for each portion of our day. If you know you are going to be late, a call is appreciated so that we can make sure we are properly staffed. Please also note that a call does not negate fees, it simply tells us to rearrange staff and is a courtesy to us. With that in mind, late fees are as follows: **Families will be charged $3 per minute, per child, after your intended pickup time (not the time you called us). This is a cash fee, due the next class day.**

**Inclement Weather Closings**

If we must close unexpectedly, for weather or any other reason, messages will be sent through the Class Dojo App. Please make sure you have it downloaded on your phone and notifications are turned on. Be sure your teacher has any contact information that is needed (daycare, grandparents, etc.). An email or text may also be sent.

**Communication:**

Use your smartphone to download the CLASS DOJO app and set up an account for Parents. You will use this app for communication with your teacher, the Treasurer/Registrar and Director. Messages about school closings, individual messages for your child, and school-wide messages will be sent through this app. You will receive invite codes from each person for communication purposes. You may either use this app or the teacher’s email to communicate. Phone and texting should be reserved for IMMEDIATE EMERGENCIES ONLY. Teachers will respond to app messages within 24 hours unless the message is received on a weekend and then a Monday reply can be expected.

Sometimes things at home affect a child in school. It is helpful for teachers and staff to know if there are any changes at home so that we can understand if there are behavior changes in the classroom. Please notify your child’s teacher if there are any major changes at home (new baby, visitors, death of a family member or pet, parent traveling, divorce, moving). If you cannot find time to talk with the teacher, just send a text, a note to pass to the teacher, or send an email. The school email is RUMNS234@gmail.com for general information or RUMNSdirector@hotmail.com to reach the director. Emails and questions may be sent at any time. Please allow a 24-hour window for a response.

It is important that you check and EMPTY, your child’s backpack *every day*. If there are any changes to our schedule, field trips, parties, homework, etc. it will be on a notice in your backpack. This information is typically also conveyed in an email or by app. There will be newsletters or emails from the teachers.

If there is someone, such as a grandparent or babysitter, that you would like included on CLASS or SCHOOL emails/messages, please let your teacher know, and provide an email and cell number. Information specific to your child may not be shared with anyone other than parents or guardians without expressed written consent.

**What to Bring**

**Materials**

We ask that each child have a **full-sized** backpack, not the cute, child-size backpacks as their hard work and art will get crushed and their things will not fit.

Each child will also need a complete change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, and socks). It is helpful if the clothes are put inside a 2-gallon plastic bag with your child’s name on it. All children need this change of clothes, as they can get messy, wet from play, and spills can happen in class. \*\*NO OVERALLS or BELTS- they are a hinderance to toilet use and children are learning independence. We cannot always stop an activity to help a child with overalls in time to avoid accidents.

**Forms to Bring to School**

(These can be found on our website [www.rumns.com](http://www.rumns.com) for download)

**\*Please note-Children will not be permitted to attend school until outstanding forms are turned in. Parents are responsible for tuition during missed time.**

Emergency Form (Complete physician information, signature, VALID phone number, and at least ONE

emergency pickup person is required)

Health Inventory and Immunization Certificate-must be dated within one calendar year of registration and updated at your child’s annual exam

Information Form

Field Trip Permission Slip

Pick Up Permission

Photo Release

Verification of receipt of Handbook

Wallet size photo of your child to attach to his/her records

\*\*If your child has already had a developmental screening, please include a doctor’s copy of a VALIDATED screening scoresheet for your child’s records.

**Clothing Policy**

Please dress your children in comfortable play clothes. We do use paint and other messy materials. On party days, we will not do anything messy and you can safely dress your child in nice clothes. Make sure your child can take down his/her pants independently. Overalls and belts make it difficult for children to use the toilet and often cause accidents.

Children must have sneakers or other closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes that cover the heels. This is for playground and classroom safety. **Crocs, boots, flip flops and sandals are not good school shoes** and **will prevent children from participating in many outdoor activities**. \*Children not in sneakers will only be allowed to use the stairs to ascend the playground as other shoes can slip on the rock wall and climbing bars. The same rule applies to children in skirts below the knee. Knees and feet get caught up in clothing and cause a fall hazard.

Maryland guidelines state that we must have a balance of indoor and outdoor play for children. As long as the temperature with wind chill is above 32 degrees, the playground is safe, and there is no precipitation at play time, we will be going outside. Be sure your children have appropriate outdoor clothing.

In cold weather, children should have winter coats that zipper, hats, and **mittens.** Do not send gloves unless your child can put them on completely by themselves. **Please do not send your child with scarves, umbrellas, rain boots, or winter boots to school.** They are safety hazards.

**What Not to Bring**:

Children should not have toys, games, videos, juice cups, water bottles, food, etc. in their backpack. It is difficult to fit work into a backpack that is already full. We have plenty of access to food and water should they be needed.

In an effort to reduce transmission of germs, personal items are not to be brought from home. Teachers and staff will NOT be responsible for theft, breakage, destruction, or loss of these personal items. Children will not be allowed to play with items from home.

**After Care Families**

Parents are expected to provide a blanket and a cot sheet for children staying for the *aftercare program*. You may purchase a cot sheet from us for $10. Blankets should cover the child from shoulder to toe without the child curling up. They must not be so thick they cannot fit in a tote with the sheet and change of clothes. They should be no thicker than a one-layer, simple fleece throw. (Hint: If it does not fit in a 2-gallon Ziploc, it will not fit in our totes and will be sent home.) Blankets and cot sheets will be sent home on Fridays to be washed, and should be returned on Mondays. Stuffed animals and pillows must be kept at home.

Parents should provide a nutritious, non-perishable lunch for their child. Please do not send soda, candy, peanut butter, or nuts in your child’s lunch. (**See section on Allergens**) WE CANNOT HEAT FOOD. Do not send food that must be cooked or heated as we are not able to do so. Hot food that you want kept hot should be in a thermal container. Cold food must have an ice pack or it will be placed in the fridge. Lunch must be packed in a bag or lunch box that closes securely and contains all components of the lunch as the entire lunch will be kept together. It is best to send non-perishable foods in lunches and make sure your child will eat them. Foods to be eaten with a fork or spoon must be cut into bite-size pieces. NO BONES. A list of suggestions will be sent with your information packet. at the beginning of the year. \*Morning and afternoon snack are provided, as is water. There is no need to send water.

\*\*Uneaten food that is saliva-contaminated (they ate from it but did not finish) will not be sent home. Unopened snacks and desserts will be returned. Children are encouraged to eat healthy choices first from lunches.

**Allergens**

Reisterstown United Methodist Church, the Nursery School, buildings and classrooms are PEANUT AND TREE NUT FREE AT ALL TIMES. According to <http://www.allergyexpert.us/food/treenut.html> and other reliable sources: Up to half of individuals allergic to peanuts will also be allergic to tree nuts. Tree nuts are nuts that grow on trees. They include almonds, cashews, hazelnuts (also called filberts), pecans, pistachios, and walnuts. Please avoid sending anything with your child that includes these or traces of these including peanut butter and peanut butter products. We reserve the right to restrict other foods as health permits for the safety of children in the church and preschool/nursery school program. To reduce exposure to unknown allergens in foods, we do not allow homemade items to be brought in for celebrations, snack, or other occasions.

**Health and Wellness:**

A child must be fever-free **without medication** for 24 hours prior to attending school. This means if your child is sent home vomiting, with diarrhea, or with a fever, *your child may NOT return the next day.* A fever is a temperature of 100.1 degrees Fahrenheit. If a child becomes ill at school, the child’s parent/guardian or someone on the emergency call list will be notified and arrangements will need to be made to pick up the child **within the hour**.

Any child diagnosed with a rash or communicable illness (strep throat, head lice, pink eye, bacterial meningitis, chicken pox, diphtheria, HFMD (Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease), hepatitis, measles, mumps, pneumonia, viral illness, rubella) may return to school when cleared by a physician through written notice. If the child’s illness requires antibiotics, s/he must be treated for 24 hours prior to returning to school. (Strep Throat is an exception that requires 48 hours of treatment prior to returning to school.) Please report any communicable or contagious illnesses to us immediately.

**Major Emergencies**: In the event of a life-threatening or major medical emergency to a child at school, one staff member will remain with the injured or ill child. The parent will be notified as soon as medical care has been obtained. Transportation to the hospital will be arranged by rescue personnel or the child’s parent. A staff member will accompany your child until you are physically present with your child.

MEDICATION

If your child has allergies or requires medication, please communicate directly with your teacher and list on all emergency/medical forms. Children who require medication such as the Epi-pen, AuviQ, or asthma inhalers must have a Medication Authorization form completed by the child’s pediatrician, accompanied by a completed Action Plan Form. The first dose of any new medication must be given at home at least 24 hours before the child returns to school so parents can monitor for adverse effects.

HYGIENE

Please note to prevent the spread of germs/illness, children and staff are asked to bathe daily and come to school in clean clothing.

SYMPTOM CHECKS

Upon arrival at the center, all children will be checked for fever and for symptoms of illness. Parents should not bring children to school who have been medicated within 24 hours for fever or are exhibiting symptoms of illness including hacking cough or severe cold symptoms. If a child or staff member exhibits these symptoms and/or has a fever of 100.1 degrees Fahrenheit, they will not be admitted to the building.

COVID-19 (and future pandemics)

Children and staff should not enter the school if they have been in contact with someone with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the last 10 days without using recommended infection control precautions.

\*Guidelines are subject to change at any time. **Childcare does not always follow the same guidelines as the public school system. Debates will not be entertained about the guidelines we are required to follow.**

Be aware that we are following CDC Guidelines for COVID-19.

**Conferences**

Part of the preschool curriculum includes observation of children, developmental assessment and conferences with parents. The teachers will hold individual parent/teacher conferences in the spring to update the parents on the child’s progress and make recommendations for the upcoming year. We will do this in person if possible, and if we are still not able to have parents in the building, conferences will be done virtually. Any issues that need to be addressed mid-year will be dealt with on a one-to-one basis. The teachers are available by app and email to answer questions that you might have about your child. Please contact the teacher by phone, note or email with your questions. Teachers will be in classroom at drop off and pick up time and unavailable for comment in person at that time.

**Safe Sanctuaries**:

Your child’s safety is of utmost importance to us. The United Methodist Church has a Safe Sanctuaries policy that affects all groups in the building that have contact with children. This policy is a United Methodist policy that promotes the safety of all children on our church grounds. This is how it affects your family:

* All people in direct contact with the children are background checked on a regular basis.

 This includes all teachers, aides, substitutes, office staff, cleaning staff, etc.

* Parents/guardians should not leave siblings unattended in automobiles in our parking lot.

 Please have another adult that you know wait with your car and child while you walk your child in to class if you are not able to bring your child with you.

* Please make sure that you hold your child’s hand from the time you leave the building all the way to your car. Our parking lot is a very busy place and the alley way next to the red building is a public thru street.
* Remember: Maryland's child safety seat law requires that all children under 8 years old be secured in a federally approved child safety seat according to the safety seat and vehicle manufacturers' instructions, unless the child is 4 feet, 9 inches or taller. The child restraint must be right for the child's size, age, and weight. (https://www.dmv.org/md-maryland/safety-laws.php)

**Abuse and Neglect Reporting**

Our policy on reporting abuse and neglect is mandated by State Law. We are all considered Mandated Reporters. This means if we suspect abuse or neglect, we must report it to Child Protective Services. We are not required to notify parents or caregivers if we are making a report.

From http://dhr.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/mandated-reporters/

**Mandated Reporters**

**You are a mandated reporter if you are one of the following:**

* Health Practitioner
* Educator
* Human Service Worker
* Police Officer

Reporting does NOT require PROOF that child abuse or neglect has occurred. Incidents are to be reported as soon as they are suspected. Waiting for proof may involve grave risk to the child and impede services to the family. Witnesses to child abuse and neglect are rare. Professional judgment and knowledge should be used to evaluate any suspicion.

Please refer to the link above for more information on abuse and neglect. Understand that not reporting makes us, as childcare staff, liable for unreported incidences if we are found to have been informed or know about them.

**Maryland State Department of Education Mandatory Developmental Screening:**

Maryland State Department of Education has implemented a new State regulation for all children in regulated care and early childhood educational programs. Beginning July 1, 2016, all children up to kindergarten entry attending regulated care and early childhood educational programs need to have a developmental screening conducted.

Developmental screening is a brief method completed by a parent or caregiver to quickly identify a child’s progress through foundational early childhood developmental milestones. A child’s development can be measured by how a child learns, speaks, moves, behaves and relates. Skills such as smiling, waving, and talking are developmental milestones. Results from developmental screenings indicate which children would benefit from a full evaluation and assessment. Children who receive early intervention services generally do better in the long term than those identified later. Upon completion of the screening, we will meet with you to discuss the findings and whether a referral to another agency for further evaluation is necessary.

Children aged birth-36 months will be required to have two screenings per year. Children aged 37 months-kindergarten entry will be required to have one screening per year. Parents should consider this process as part of required documentation in order for the child to attend our or any other licensed child care program in the State.

**Discipline:**

Discipline in the classroom will be handled through an environment that provides clear boundaries and interesting activities. Discipline is an integral part of our curriculum. Our teachers model caring behavior and help children build positive relationships with each other. Teachers also help children learn language so that they can express their feelings appropriately.

Effective Guidance techniques applied to all children include:

* Reinforcement of appropriate behavior – smiles, eye contact, verbal praise
* Modeling of appropriate behavior techniques
* Redirection of child to another activity
* Teaching the child to solve his own problems using social stories and dialogue to deal with frustration

In the unlikely event that a child’s negative behavior becomes chronic, parents will be asked to meet with the teacher and director for a conference in order to more effectively help the child.

**Discharge Policy**

Reisterstown United Methodist Nursery School reserves the right to drop or terminate service when the welfare of the child or group would make this advisable. Reasons may include but not be limited to:

* Lack of parental cooperation
* Non-payment of fees
* Inability of the child to adjust to the school
* Continual late pick up/drop off
* Failure to inform the school of possible known COVID-19 diagnosis or symptoms thereof, including sending a medicated child to school
* Inability to meet the needs of the child without hiring additional staff.

**Payment Policy**

Payments are due the month prior to service (ex. October is due in September). Families will be given the option of 3 payment plans: monthly, bi-monthly, or weekly. We are not permitted to take payment more than 3 months in advance. Please contact Lani Hoffmann immediately if there is some concern about payment. We are willing to work with you.

If you are paying by check, please be sure to include the child’s name on the check. If you are paying by cash, make sure your payment is in an envelope with the child’s name on it. Please put payment in designated envelope in the main pocket of your child’s backpack. Whether you send it in backpack or pay online, please send a message to Mrs. Hoffmann or Ms. Hutchinson with a note to that effect.

There will be a $10 late fee assessed after the 30th of each month. There will be a $35 fee assessed for returned checks. Repeated returned checks by a family may result in cash or money order payments only.

Once a child is 2 months behind in tuition, they will not be allowed to come to school until payment is up to date. If a child’s tuition is not up to date at enrollment time, his/her place for next year will not be guaranteed. Recommendation letters for kindergarten and enrollment for the upcoming year will not be honored for those who are behind in their payments

If you need to terminate your child’s enrollment, a two-week notice is to be given to the school director(s); otherwise you will continue to be charged your monthly tuition. (No reimbursement of tuition will be granted).

All tuition is due regardless of sickness, quarantine, behavioral/disciplinary removal, vacations, weather-related closings or holidays (including Thanksgiving, Christmas, snow days, and Spring Break). Please see Public Health Emergencies section for further information.

**Birthdays, Celebrations and Snacks**

The preschool provides a snack each day for the children and often, it will be planned and sometimes reinforces the lesson of the day. Please let us know if your child has any allergies or food restrictions so that we can make other arrangements. We will say a blessing before eating our snack. Keep in mind, as a Methodist church, we say a Christian blessing.

If you would like to bring or have a birthday snack for your child, please make arrangements with the teacher. Staff will give guidance as to what we can have, and what can be brought in as permitted. Homemade food is not permitted at any time. **Birthday snacks may be brownies, cookies, popsicles, crispy rice treats, gummies, or fruit.** Cupcakes are not allowed. All food must be tree nut, peanut food at all times.

**Electronics and Screen Time**

Screen time is reserved for educational material at special times. Electronics are not permitted at school. Watches, phones, iPads, tablets, video games, recording devices, and tracking devices should be left at home.

**Chapel Time**

Children will have monthly Chapel as a school in the church sanctuary with Pastor Jen Eschliman.

**Records Retrieval/Confidentiality**

All records requests must be made in writing to the director. Only custodial parents/guardians will be permitted to request records from a child’s file. Health records and items that were provided to the parent can be copied on request. Other information in the file will be made available at the discretion of the school. Non-custodial adults must obtain a court order to obtain records. In the event of split custody, no preference will be given to either parent, however, the personal information from one parent will not be supplied to the other without court order.

Requests for assessments and recommendations may be made directly to the child’s teacher in writing. They must be requested with 14 days’ notice to complete. A release must be signed in order for us to complete recommendations either in writing or verbally to schools or other entities about any child.

**Pet Policy**

For safety and health reasons, pets are not permitted in the building. If you have a comfort animal, or other working animal, a certificate must be provided to staff before your animal will be allowed to enter.

**Volunteer Policy**

COMAR requires that centers make clients aware of volunteer policies in place. Please note that while this is our normal Volunteer Policy, no one but staff and children are permitted in the building.

All church volunteers are required to complete Safe Sanctuaries Training and are background checked by the church before being permitted to begin.

Our volunteers are always under the supervision of staff members when children are present.

No person is permitted to volunteer if they would be prohibited from employment because they have received a conviction, a probation before judgment disposition, a not criminally responsible disposition, or a pending

charge for the commission or attempted commission of:

(1) A crime involving:

(a) A child;

(b) Cruelty to animals;

(c) Domestic violence; or

(d) A weapons or firearms violation of federal or state laws;

(2) A sex offense;

(3) A violent crime classified as a felony;

(4) Abduction or kidnapping;

(5) Abuse of a child or an adult;

(6) Confinement of an unattended child;

(7) Manufacturing, distributing, or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance;

(8) Perjury;

(9) Pornography;

(10) Possession with intent to manufacture, distribute, or dispense a controlled dangerous substance; or

(11) Reckless endangerment.

COMAR 13A.16.06 Reg. 3A

**Public Health Emergency/Forced Closure Policy**

In the event of an emergency closure, forced closure, closure due to pandemic, we will make every effort to keep everyone informed. We take our lead from the Office of Childcare, church leaders and public officials. If we are forced to close, every effort will be made to notify you as early as possible, and all belongings will be sent home in case of an extended closure. Emails with updates will come from teachers and/or the director as we are able to provide them.

If school is closed for UP TO TWO WEEKS: A packet will be given for at home learning and at least one session per week of virtual learning will be provided. Full tuition is expected.

TWO to FOUR WEEKS: A packet will be provided for at home learning, at least one session of virtual learning per week, and 2/3 tuition will be due.

Greater than FOUR WEEKS: No tuition will be due and service will cease until further notice.

**Please email RUMNS234@gmail.com if you have questions regarding this handbook.**