

Zoar United Methodist Church Preschool

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2026-2027
Parent Handbook

Welcome

Welcome from the Pastor

Families and Friends of the Zoar UMC Preschool,

We would like to welcome you all to the preschool of Zoar United Methodist Church! Our preschool has been a part of Zoar UMC for decades, and we consider you to be a part of our church community! When you are a part of the preschool program, we consider you to be family!

Our congregation is invested in our preschool. Members of our church make up our involved preschool board! We desire to be connected and consider the preschool to be a ministry of our church!

If you are a returning family, we welcome you back home! If this is your first time with our preschool, we extend our welcome and hospitality!

As the pastor, I want to offer an invitation to join with us in worship on Sunday mornings at 10:00 am. If you do not have a church home, we hope you will consider yours to be Zoar UMC!

May God Bless Our Time Together,

Rev. Tracy Sever

Pastor of the Zoar UMC

Welcome from the Preschool Director

Dear Zoar Preschool Families,

Welcome to Zoar United Methodist Church Preschool! We are honored that you have chosen Zoar for your child's early learning experience.

At Zoar Preschool, we believe the early childhood years are a precious time for growth, discovery, and building confidence. Our goal is to create a warm and nurturing environment where children feel safe, loved, and excited to learn each day.

Our program blends developmentally appropriate early childhood education, with Christian values that emphasize kindness, compassion, and respect for others.

With many years of experience working with young children here at Zoar, it is a joy and privilege for me to serve as Preschool Director. I care deeply about this program, our teachers, and every child who walks through our doors.

We look forward to partnering with your family during these important early years.

Tracie Tolentino

Preschool Director

Mission Statement

Zoar Preschool is a non-profit, self-supporting ministry of Zoar United Methodist Church.

We share Christian principles through scripture and stories that can be found in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. We strive to do this through curriculum, chapel time, and daily interactions with our children.

We believe each child:

- Is a child of God
- Is loved unconditionally
- Is unique
- Has the right to develop to their full potential

We believe that weekday programs:

- Should provide examples of the highest qualities of Christian faith
- Assist parents in these crucial years of child rearing and development

Our goal is to provide a loving environment where children develop socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively, and spiritually.

We commit ourselves to providing a weekday program that brings together the best we know about the education of young children and our highest understanding of the Christian faith.

Program Overview

Zoar Preschool serves children ages 6 months through 5 years in accordance with the Gwinnett County public school system calendar from the hours 9am to 1pm. The children are broken up into the age groups as follows based on their age as of **September 1st, 2026**.

- Infants and Toddlers: 6-23 months
- 2-year-olds
- 3-year-olds
- 4/5-year-olds

Classes are taught with **smaller** than state-mandated ratios, according to UMC Safe Sanctuary Guidelines, that allow each child to form an interpersonal relationship with their teachers and peers. Each class is carefully curated with a focus on helping your child learn developmentally appropriate skills for their age. Children will participate and develop skills through play-based exploration in the following:

- Language and literacy
- Social and emotional
- Problem solving and critical thinking
- Physical and motor development
- Independence and self-care
- Christian values

Tuition & Financial Policies

General Policy

Zoar Preschool is a self-supporting ministry. Enrollment secures your child's spot for the entire academic school year (August through May, or the remainder thereof); it is **not** a month-to-month arrangement.

Tuition Structure

Tuition is based on the full academic year. Tuition may be paid in full and include a 5% discount via **BRIGHTWHEEL**, cash, or check. For your convenience and as a courtesy, annual tuition may be divided into 10 equal, interest-free monthly installments. These installments remain the same (August through May) regardless of holidays, inclement weather, student absences, or the number of school days in any given month.

Online Payments & Late Fees

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month and is paid via **BRIGHTWHEEL**/our online payment portal.

- **Late Fees:** If payment is not received by the 3rd of the month, an automatic, non-refundable \$10 late fee will be applied. Because payments are made online, this deadline applies regardless of weekends or holidays.
- **Suspension:** Children may not return to school until the full account balance, including all late fees, is brought current.
- **Unenrollment:** If an account becomes more than 30 days overdue, the child will be unenrolled. To return, the family must re-register (including payment of the registration fee), provided a spot is available.

Withdrawal

A 30-day written notice provided to the Administration is required to withdraw a child. An exception is made only for students providing official confirmation of an immediate transfer into Ga-PreK.

Discounts & Credits

- Sibling Discount: A 10% discount on tuition is available for the second child and each additional enrolled sibling.
- Full Payment Discount: A 5% discount is applied if the annual tuition is paid in full.
- Combined Savings: For families qualifying for multiple discounts, the 10% sibling discount is applied first to the base tuition, followed by the 5% full-payment discount on the remaining tuition balance.
- Referral Credit: A one-time \$10 credit is awarded for each newly registered and paid child you refer (excludes siblings of currently enrolled students).

Acknowledgment:

I understand that tuition is based on the full school year and is divided into equal monthly installments that do not change based on attendance or calendar variations.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

School Schedule

Other than the dates noted below, Zoar UMC Preschool follows the official GCPs approved calendar.

- School hours are from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Please arrive and pick up your child promptly.
- **Mandatory** Orientation and Open House is Thursday, August 6, 2026 at 6:30 pm.
- The first day of the school year is August 10, 2026.
- Digital days are September 18th, November 3rd, and March 19th. We do try to schedule an optional Field Trip on 2 of these days and families are encouraged to bring siblings along.
- Early release is at 12:00 pm on October 28, October 29, March 3, and March 4.
- The preschool will be closed for Good Friday on March 26, 2027.
- Graduation is on Friday, May 7, 2027 at 6:30 pm.
- The Last day of our preschool year is May 14, 2027.

Arrival and Dismissal

Morning Drop-Off

- **Carpool Drop-off** begins at **8:55 AM** and ends at **9:15 AM**.
- Teachers will escort children from cars. Once inside, children will have their temperature taken and be provided with hand sanitizer.
- Parents should remain in their vehicles during carpool.
- We understand that mornings can be unpredictable; however, consistent attendance is vital for your child's transition into the classroom. **If you expect to arrive between 9:15 AM and 9:30 AM, please notify us in advance via BRIGHTWHEEL, come to the front door, and ring the bell.**
- **To protect the integrity of our learning environment and minimize disruptions to the class, arrival after 9:30 AM requires prior authorization. Please message the Preschool Director via BRIGHTWHEEL as early as possible so we can coordinate a time that best supports your child's entry into their daily routine.**

Afternoon Pick-Up

- **Carpool Pickup** is from **12:55 PM to 1:15 PM**. Children must be picked up by **1:15 PM**
- Teachers will escort children to their vehicles.
- Parents are responsible for securing children in their car seats. Please pull forward out of the carpool lane and pull over to buckle your children into their seats so that pickup may continue smoothly
- Children will not be released to individuals not on the pickup list to ensure safety of students.
- Any designated person picking up your child may be asked to provide a legal ID to verify they are allowed to pick up the child.

Late Pick-Up

- After **1:15 PM**, a late fee of **\$30 per 15 minutes** will **AUTOMATICALLY** be charged.
- If your child has not been picked up by **1:15 PM** we will attempt to contact you and then the emergency contacts provided.
- If after 1 hour of no contact or communication from you, authorities may be contacted as all teachers at the preschool are mandated reporters.

Health & Safety

To maintain a healthy environment for all children and staff:

Children should **remain home if they have:**

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Contagious illness
- Unexplained rash
- Excessive or discolored nasal discharge

Children must remain home **24 hours after symptoms end without medication.**

Hand washing and sanitizing are practiced throughout the day. Classrooms and shared spaces are cleaned regularly.

Zoar preschool reserves the right to close the school briefly to disinfect the school if multiple children are diagnosed with the same communicable disease in a short period of time.

All children must have an updated immunization form #3231 from within 30 days of enrollment, per Georgia law.

Zoar Preschool does not administer medication during the school day except for preauthorized:

- EpiPens
- Inhalers

These require a completed medical authorization form signed by a physician.

Medication must be given directly to the **Preschool Director**. **Please do not send medication of any kind in backpacks.**

Discipline Philosophy

Zoar Preschool uses **positive guidance techniques**.

Teachers help children learn:

- kindness
- respect
- cooperation
- problem-solving

Redirection, modeling, and encouragement are used to guide behavior.

Physical punishment is never used.

If behavior concerns arise, teachers and the Preschool Director will work with parents to support the child.

Zoar preschool works closely with local resources such as Babies Can't Wait, Building Babies Brains, and GCPS Early Learning and School Readiness to help your child to the best of our ability.

We are committed to the success of every child; however, our program may not be the ideal setting for all developmental, behavioral, or health needs. If we observe that a child requires more specialized support than our facility can provide, we will conduct an evaluation to determine the best interests of the child.

If it is determined that our school cannot adequately serve those needs, the Preschool reserves the right to initiate a transition with you. At that time, we will provide referrals to age-appropriate GCPS and/or county support services. Parents are required to **make contact with these services or begin the transition process within 30 days** of the recommendation. While we will make every effort to work within the specific timeframes of outside agencies, our priority is to ensure the child begins moving toward an environment that can most effectively and safely serve them.

Parent Communication

Communication with families occurs primarily through **BRIGHTWHEEL**. If you are not already a registered user, please **do NOT download the app until prompted to do so**.

The BRIGHTWHEEL app is REQUIRED, as it is a vital tool to the functioning of Zoar preschool.

Please ensure you have "Push Notifications" enabled in your phone settings for the BRIGHTWHEEL app to receive time-sensitive alerts, arrival updates, and emergency announcements.

BRIGHTWHEEL will be used for:

- Announcements

- Billing
- Messages from teachers
- School updates
- Photos and more

Parents are encouraged to maintain open communication with teachers and the Preschool Director.

No information is too much information. Please communicate with us as much as possible!!!

Supplies

Children should bring daily:

1. A **full-sized** book bag (a mini backpack will not hold papers and projects that we send home)
2. Lunch box with nutritious lunch which may include a juice box/pouch or extra spill-proof cup
3. Spill-proof water bottle with **ONLY WATER**. We encourage the children to hydrate throughout the day with water. They are welcome to bring juice with lunch, but hydration with water is important.
4. Seasonally appropriate change of clothes (if your child is potty-training, this should include more than one change of clothes, including socks and shoes.)

Additional classroom supply lists may be provided by teachers.

Events and Field Trips

While school events are not required, participation is highly encouraged as this helps Zoar preschool to be the close-knit environment that we strive for.

As a non-profit ministry, Zoar Preschool does occasionally hold family fund-raising events to help offset costs for our preschool. We request family participation and attempt to make these events fun for everyone.

Twice a year a field trip will occur off campus; parents are responsible for transporting their child to this event and always supervising their child. These occur on digital days, and siblings are welcome.

If you do not wish to participate in these events, alternative care **CANNOT** be provided.

Handbook agreement

I acknowledge that I have read the Zoar Preschool Parent Handbook and agree to follow the policies and procedures outlined in the registration paperwork and parent handbook provided.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____