

Noah's Little Ark  
Christian Preschool &  
Early Education Programs



Student & Family  
Handbook

2022 – 2023

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**Noah's Little Ark is a ministry of  
First United Methodist Church  
520 E. Birch St., Palmyra, PA 17078**

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Church Office Phone: 717-838-2551  
<https://palmyrafirst.org/noahs-little-ark/>  
**noahslittlearkpa@gmail.com**



Noah's Little Ark shall not discriminate against families on the basis of: national or ethnic origin, race or skin color, religion or creed, sex or sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, age, individuals with a disability, genetic information, or any protected classes under the law.



### **History of NLA**

Noah's Little Ark was started as a Christian Preschool in 1998 by members of First United Methodist Church of Palmyra to provide a safe, affordable, quality environment for pre-kindergarten children of families who live in Palmyra, PA.

Noah's Little Ark's mission has expanded, and NLA is now a ministry of First United Methodist Church of Palmyra providing community-oriented, family-centered, affordable Christian education programs with safe, quality environments and events for children ages two through Kindergarten of families who live, work, or travel in Palmyra, PA. NLA offers morning programs for children ages two through Kindergarten ages, and afternoon programs for children ages four through Kindergarten ages.

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## **Mission & Purpose**

Noah's Little Ark, as a ministry of First United Methodist Church of Palmyra, shall provide community-oriented, family-centered, affordable Christian education programs with safe, quality environments and events for children ages two through Kindergarten of families who live, work, or travel in Palmyra, PA.

As a ministry to the community, Noah's Little Ark (NLA) shall be a Christian Preschool and Kindergarten Supplement Program where each child can develop socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually, while fostering Christian faith and discipleship in a loving and accepting atmosphere.

## **Organization**

Daily operations are managed and coordinated by the NLA school director, and implemented by a team of co-operative staff. The director works collaboratively with the NLA School Board.

### **NLA Director**

The Noah's Little Ark school director is responsible for supervising all staff and volunteers, student class placements, collaborating and communicating with families, and promoting the mission of the school. All NLA staff report to the NLA director. The director reports to the NLA School Board.

### **NLA School Board**

Noah's Little Ark has a governing School Board made up of both church member volunteers and parent volunteers who work cooperatively together to facilitate the needs of NLA by providing visionary oversight and leadership. The school board meets a minimum of 6 times per year. The school board is responsible for setting, updating, and enforcing: the policies, financial charges, business guidelines, handbooks, procedures, and more. The board members support various events with NLA, brainstorm ideas for fundraisers, and personally volunteer in various capacities. They also provide valuable insight and connections to the community and support and encourage the NLA director and all staff members.

## **NLA Staff**

The Noah's Little Ark staff are hired by, and answer directly to, the NLA school director. All staff applications are run through three background checks: the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check, the Child Abuse History Certification, and the FBI fingerprint record check in accordance the Child Protective Services Law.

All NLA staff receive yearly trainings, participate in staff meetings, and are under ongoing instruction, direction, and guidance from the NLA director. All staff are required to complete the Teacher Track of Professional Ethics and Educator Discipline Act training, which covers professional and appropriate relationships with students, recognition of the signs of sexual misconduct, and mandatory child abuse reporting requirements in Pennsylvania for school staff. NLA staff are trained in first aid and CPR.

## **Scheduling, Calendar, School Hours**

Morning Preschool Classes: 9:00-11:30am

Morning Kindergarten BOOST Classes: 8:30- transportation to Forge

Lunch Bunch: 11:30-12:30

Afternoon Preschool Classes: 12:30-3:00pm

Afternoon Kindergarten BOOST Classes: arrival from Forge-3:20pm

## **Calendar**

The first day of school in September is always the Tuesday following Labor Day.

The last day of school in May is Wednesday before Memorial Day.

Pre-K graduation ceremonies are on the next day, Thursday morning.

NLA is always closed between December 21 and Jan 1.

NLA sets the yearly school calendar of other days to coincide as much as possible with the Palmyra Area School District calendar.

The school calendar is updated and a link available on our website.

<https://palmyrafirst.org/noahs-little-ark/>

## **Emergency Closings**

Parents are responsible for checking email, social media, and/or news outlets (WGAL8 & ABC27) for delays, cancellations, and early dismissal days. We will communicate about emergency closings or schedule changes via email, Facebook and on our main webpage on the church website. <https://palmyrafirst.org/noahs-little-ark/>

**Delayed Opening:** When a delay is called, Morning classes run 10:45-12:30; Lunch Bunch 12:30-1:30; and Afternoon classes run 1:30-3:20.

**Early Dismissal:** When an early dismissal is announced, school closes at 11:30. All afternoon/evening activities are cancelled.

**Snow Make-up Days:** After two weather cancelations, snow days will be “madeup” according to the school calendar and the Palmyra Area School District. Excessive closures may result in an alteration to the end of the school year, which will be communicated at that time. All snow days, delayed openings, and early dismissals are nonrefundable.

## **Student Application and Enrollment**

All student applications are accepted digitally. The application form is available on our webpage at [noahslittlearkpa.org](http://noahslittlearkpa.org). The application is considered complete and is marked as accepted **only** when the non-refundable registration fee is received.

Enrollment space in classrooms is determined according to physical space and appropriate staff-to-student ratios. Class space is filled on a first come, first-served basis. When age-appropriate class space is not available, a waiting list will be started according to the date of the accepted application.

Changes to your child’s program may be requested at any time but can only be made if there is space and availability for that change.

## **Confidentiality**

All information concerning your family and your child is kept private



and secure in the NLA office. All NLA staff are required to maintain

confidentiality and conduct themselves both in and out of school in a professional manner.

## **Environments**

Noah's Little Ark is carefully organized with a co-operative team of staff who are trained to provide and maintain quality school and classroom environments that fulfill the mission of NLA's ministry.

### **School Environment**

Our curriculum and school space provide a nurturing Christian environment in which children can gain fundamental social skills that help them to build a life-long love and enjoyment of learning.

**School Curriculum:** The NLA school has crafted a curriculum that incorporates the learning standards provided by the State of PA into monthly and weekly learning themes to promote Kindergarten readiness. Children learn colors, shapes, sizes, numbers, and letters. They also begin developing critical thinking skills by exploring, creating, and participating in STEM activities and art experiences. Our classrooms are full of educational materials that encourage matching, sorting, assembling, measuring, manipulating, and play.

**Christian faith:** An environment that nurtures Christian faith includes staff who model the kinds of attitudes and behaviors we want our children to learn, including care for ourselves and our families, helpful involvement in the community, encouraging words to others, a positive outlook on life's opportunities and challenges, and above all showing love for all people who may be different in appearance, behavior, status, or belief. There are also many opportunities in our classrooms when faith songs, stories from the Bible, prayers in the name of Jesus, discussions about God, and more, are presented and students are invited to participate in them. The NLA staff will be happy to share information about those opportunities and discussions with you, so you can talk about it at home, too.

**Social Skills:** Social skills are a top priority for early education, as emotional and physical safety are the foundation for an individual

student's willingness to listen, try new things, express themselves, and interact with others, both peers and authority figures. Many social skills are needed in a school environment that are not used at home, such as standing/walking in a line, waiting for a turn to do an activity, raising a hand to indicate a desire to speak in the group setting, etc. These skills take time and practice, and once learned will lift a student to new levels of observation and self-awareness that build self-esteem and confidence and enhance learning experiences.

**Enjoyment:** Fun and enjoyment are also critical components of early learning. Willing participation in puzzles, games, and imagination are evidence of higher-level mental abilities, opening the way for compassion, empathy, abstract thinking, and problem-solving skills.

### **Classroom Environment**

At Noah's Little Ark, we believe each child is a unique person with individual preferences, strengths, and weaknesses, who grow and thrive in both individual and group interactions, such as the whole class instruction segment that we call "circle time." Unique to our program is the quality of music and art that our staff are able to offer in an integrated classroom experience.

**Play-Based Learning:** Play-based learning is recommended by the State of PA and early childhood institutions, because it promotes deep learning skills and is developmentally appropriate for children in preschool. Teachers carefully craft learning centers and activities that help children discover their world and develop their academic skills through games and play.

An important part of the learning aspect as opposed to just play, is to have adults interact with children verbally, observing their behaviors and speaking about the connections the child is making, asking the child to observe what happened, suggesting a next step to try, and asking the child if they are pleased with the results of their choices. For example, a child puts three red blocks in a truck, and the adult says, "You put red blocks in the that red truck. How many did you put in there?... Where is the truck going to take these

blocks?... The blocks fell out, are you ok with that? Would you like to try again, or a different way?"

**Small Group & Individualized Instruction:** Teachers and staff create both small group and individualized learning experiences that meet each child where they are and help them toward their next level of achievement. Each teacher/staff meets with the whole class, with small groups, and with individual students daily to be sure they are getting the challenges and supports they need to grow.

**Large Group Circle Time:** Children gather daily for a meeting as a class. During this time, staff introduce new concepts, read stories, and focus the group on the learning goals for the day. Many classes also have a closing meeting, where children reflect on what they've learned and share their achievements.

**Music:** Each class participates in a weekly music class that includes singing, dancing, instruments, and games. The music teacher is a musician with skills and training in early education and pre-school music. Children learn fun but simple basics of singing, clapping, dancing, and playing instruments. Classes prepare and present at least one musical program to parents each year.

**Art:** We use two types of art experiences at NLA: Process Art and Product Art.

*Process Art:* These are experiences designed to allow the children to be in control of their work and the emphasis is on the process or discovery. Children might mix together all types of media such as cotton balls, yarn, buttons, markers, paint, tape, cardboard, etc. They may experiment with results using trains or blocks instead of paint brushes. They may paint with objects found in nature and discover various textures. Help your child continue learning from these creations by saying, "Tell me about it," or "How did you make this?" as opposed to "What is it?"

***Product Art:*** This is work that has a predicted outcome or product. With these projects, children are working on following directions and taking pride in their work when comparing it to a sample. They practice important skills of observation, control, listening, and cooperation. Help your child continue learning from these creations by asking, “What steps did you follow?” and “What was the hardest part of this project?”

All art materials are non-toxic. Almost all materials are washable.

Some art projects are sent home right away, some are displayed in the classrooms and hallways, and some are saved for later display at the NLA Art Show.

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to be present each day they are registered to attend. Absences should be communicated to the NLA office, and also to the classroom staff if you know in advance.

Telephone the NLA office by 9:15 am to report an absence.

Tardiness, or late arrivals, will **not** be accepted after 9:20 without a valid written medical excuse. While students are welcomed and walked to their classrooms by office staff, please be aware that the student has missed out on valuable transition time, check-in, group activities, and instruction time.

Acceptable reasons for late arrival or early dismissal include: medical appointments that cannot be re-scheduled, personal illness, emergency situations communicated to the director.

**Supervision:** From the moment a student is dropped off until the moment they are signed out for the day, they are constantly and consistently under the direct supervision of an assigned NLA staff. Anyone may drop off a student to NLA. There are specific, strict policies concerning adults authorized to pick up an NLA student.

After we release a child into the care of an authorized adult, families are free to talk and visit on the grounds outside the church building.

**Note to Walkers:** Families living close to NLA often choose to walk to school. As always, please be careful and aware of traffic and vehicles. Wait outside, close to the drop-off/pick-up door, and the NLA staff walk your child in/out the same as all the other children.

### **Emergency Contacts and Student Information Sheet**

The Student Information Sheet is always consulted as the primary authorizing document for your child, including in an emergency. Therefore, notify the NLA office **immediately** of any and all changes to home address, emergency contact persons and phone numbers, and persons authorized to sign and pick-up your child.

### **Arrival**

Drop-off from the parking lot and main school entrance on Franklin Street will begin 5 minutes before the posted arrival time; approximately 8:55 for morning drop-off and 12:25 for afternoondrop-off. Teachers will begin their instructional time with students in the classrooms at 9:02 and 12:32.

**Please encourage your child to gather and carry their own belongings.** This is one of the keys to building the independence they will need throughout their school careers.

Adults are asked to say a quick, cheerful goodbye, and allow your child to transition into the care of the NLA staff, who will walk them to their classroom. Every NLA staff member is trained in helping children to transition smoothly, and are kind, gentle, and patient when children have difficult days.

### **Dismissal**

Please allow your child to attend the full class session unless there is an emergency. Early pick-ups can be challenging and disrupting for

your child as well as other students in the classroom. Pick-up verification and signatures will begin 2-3 minutes prior to the posted dismissal time.

**Adults Authorized to Pick-up:** Every adult picking up students will be asked to sign before the student is given into their care. **Only adults listed on the student's information sheet will be allowed to sign-out your child.** If staff do not recognize the adult authorized to pick up that student, picture identification (such as a driver's license) will be required to match with a name that was given by the legal parent/guardians as a person authorized to pick up. We will ask for ID from anyone we don't know (including a parent we may not recognize or remember), so please **ask all authorized pick-up people to bring IDs with them.** This helps us to be sure each child returns home safely.

**Unauthorized Pick-ups:** If someone asks to pick up a child, but we do not have written permission signed by a parent, we will contact a parent to obtain verified, verbal permission before we release the child. For your child's safety, the school will need to make contact with you **using the phone numbers you have provided.** We will not be able to talk with you by having someone hand us their cellphone.

**Custody Agreements:** Children must legally be released to either biological parent with the presentation of a birth certificate, unless we have a copy of a legal custody agreement indicating otherwise. If there is a discrepancy or disagreement between parents at pick-up time, the child will remain with NLA school staff and the local authorities will be contacted to mediate the dispute.

### **Late Pick-up Fees**

Please be prompt every day. If you will be unavoidably delayed, please call the school office to let us know the situation and leave a message if we are unavailable to answer. We check messages regularly and will pass the information along to your child and the classroom staff.

After a 5-minute grace period, you will be charged \$1/minute for each minute until your child is signed out.

*Example: Student's program ends at 11:30, and on Monday you enter the parking lot at 11:32 and are fine, but on Wednesday you arrive at 11:37, so you are late and will incur charges.*

Children who are not picked up by the end of the grace period (that is, the pick-up person is not yet in the parking lot) are walked to the office, where they will be with an NLA staff at all times. The pick-up person will need to park in the lot and ring the office doorbell.

Payment for late pick-ups is due **at the time of pick-up**. That means that the following day a late fee of \$10 will be automatically added, and every 7 days thereafter until the charges are paid in full.

### **After School**

Please feel free to spend time with school friends following your child's program time. Unless otherwise stated, the church playground, pavilion, and grassy area behind the parking lot are all great places to picnic, make friends, and enjoy some fun time together before heading home.

Please do not allow any children to play in or close to the parking lot and driveways, or in the grassy area beside sidewalks, or the road. Thanks for helping us keep everyone safe!

### **Communications**

We believe active communication between home and school is one of the keys to a child's early learning success. Adults who live in the house with your child are your child's first teachers, and so your feedback is important to us. We ask that families communicate with us regularly, so we can work together to provide a wonderful early childhood experience for all the children.

School-wide communication will be primarily through email, and often using mass-communication tools. Please be sure to check your spam or promotions folder for messages during the first few weeks of



school and mark the email as valid or “not spam” so that your email provider will send it to your main inbox.

### **Teacher/Class Communications**

If you have specific questions for your child’s classroom team, you are welcome to contact the teacher anytime using email or the online classroom communication tool. It can be tempting to ask the classroom staff questions face-to-face about your child’s progress during dismissal, but we ask that you refrain from doing so as the staff are not able to privately discuss children in a public setting, nor are they always available during the busy pick-up time.

If you need additional support after you’ve talked via email with the teacher, please contact the school director.

### **Communications to the Director**

All communications to the director can be emailed at any time at [noahslittlearkpa@gmail.com](mailto:noahslittlearkpa@gmail.com) or by calling the NLA office phone: **717-832-2275**. The director will be happy to schedule an in-person meeting if needed and may include the teacher or classroom staff if appropriate.

**Office Email:** The director will answer your questions or forward your message to the appropriate party (if it concerns finances, or pastoral resources, or something in your child’s classroom, etc.)

**Office Phone Calls:** Our primary focus during the school day is working with the children, so please leave a message if no one answers. We check messages regularly throughout the day.

**Feedback:** Please share feedback, concerns, and ideas with the NLA school director. If you’d like to provide comments to the NLA School Board, please do so with a written letter provided to the director. A copy of your letter will be shared with the school board.

## **Staff Phone Numbers**

The School Board and NLA Director are concerned with maintaining both families' and staff's privacy and time outside of school program hours; therefore, NLA has strict policies for the staff concerning appropriate and professional communication with families and one another. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

**Texts:** Please do not text or call any NLA staff concerning NLA events or situations, either during school hours or outside of school hours.

**Phone Calls:** Please do not text or call any NLA staff concerning NLA events or situations, either during school hours or outside of school hours. If you have questions or concerns, contact the NLA director.

## **Assessments**

Quality assessment tools are used at NLA to evaluate the level at which each child is currently functioning.

## **Evaluations**

The evaluations represent a student's ability only as observed at preschool. It is a "snapshot" measurement with limited use. Growth can be observed by comparison with previous evaluations. Remember, children develop at their own individual rates!

## **Conferences**

Evaluations of students are done twice per school year, once in the fall and once early spring. Following the spring evaluation, parents will be invited to sign up for a time slot to come and conference with the class teacher in person.

## **Discipline**

Discipline comes from the word disciple, which means, "one who is a learner". Therefore, discipline is a positive part of school, and not a punitive action. Discipline is the responsibility of the teacher and/or staff or the adult responsible for the safety of the children at that time.

## **Behavior Management**

Children are expected to act in kind, helpful, and safe ways. School and classroom rules are stated clearly and simply, at a level appropriate to each classroom. Constructive, developmentally appropriate child guidance and management techniques are used at all times, which include redirection, separation from problem situations, talking with the child/ren about the situation, identifying appropriate behaviors, and encouragement to rejoin the class.

We understand that many preschoolers may use misguided behavior because they have not yet learned how to appropriately express their feelings and emotions and/or what is acceptable behavior. However, at times a child's behavior may endanger or significantly disrupt the learning environment for others. We want to assure parents that we will address such behavior immediately.

## **Disruptive Behavior Improvement Process**

When redirection and positive reinforcement are not effective, and the child's behavior presents a continued risk to self/others and repeatedly interferes with the learning environment for other students, then the NLA policy plan of action is as follows:

1. The first incident will be communicated to the parent(s) using a private communication as well as a written note sent home with the child.
2. Following a second incident, a Behavior Plan Conference between the parents and teacher will be scheduled to discuss strategies and develop a plan of action for success and to prevent future behavior incidents.
3. Should a third incident occur, the child will be removed from the classroom setting and parents will be called. Referral for outside advice and evaluation may be suggested.
4. A second meeting with parent(s), teacher, and director will review the results of an outside evaluation, and/or establish steps necessary for the child to safely re-join the classroom.
5. Should the outlined plan not be followed by the student, and/or parents, and/or no measurable improvement in behavior be observed, and/or one of the above steps is not

followed by parents, then, as a last step, NLA may dismiss the child from our preschool program.

### **Student Accommodations**

Any student with physical, mental, or emotional ability challenges will receive basic accommodations to enhance their learning and chances of success. We have accommodated students with walkers, students with mobility challenges, students with verbal or language struggles, students with various dietary restrictions, and students receiving outside services. To do so, we require that, during the registration and enrollment process, NLA must be provided with written documentation of the student's disabilities and requests for relevant accommodations.

Although our goal is to provide opportunities to everyone who seeks an early learning experience, Noah's Little Ark reserves the right to deny a registration request if the facility cannot be reasonably altered to accommodate the need, or if the school does not have an appropriate class available, or if the NLA staff is not able to provide adequate care.

### **Health and Illness**

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Our goal is to maintain a safe, healthy school environment for all students and all NLA staff.

### **Child Health Report**

Every year, each enrolled child must have a health report completed and signed by a physician, CRNP, or Physician's Assistant. Each child attending NLA must be up to date on their vaccination schedule as recommended by the CDC Department of Health immunization schedule recommendations for children. The only exception is in the case of a medical exemption signed by a physician.

### **Illness at School**

Illnesses at school include but are not limited to: fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit, vomiting, diarrhea, bleeding injuries requiring

more than a bandage, excessive congestion, or inability to stay awake.

Should a child become sick at school, we will contact the parents first, then the emergency contacts. We expect that someone will pick up your child within 20 minutes. Students will be removed from the classroom and given a quiet place to rest while they wait.

### **Illness at Home**

To return to school, children must be symptom-free for 48 hours. This includes being fever-free ***without the aid of fever-reducers*** and free of vomiting and diarrhea for the last 48 hours. Children who are taking antibiotics may return after 24 full hours on the medication. Some illnesses will require a doctor's note prior to returning.

### **Medication**

Noah's Little Ark typically does not dispense medication. If you have a special circumstance that requires medication to be provided at school (such as an EPI-Pen), please contact the director for the required paperwork and permissions. Please be aware that a signed note from your doctor is required and all medication must be in the original packaging clearly labeled with the child's name.

### **Tuition Policy**

Tuition is calculated on a school year basis and divided into 9 equal monthly payments as an automatic payment plan. Monthly payments remain the same each month regardless of the actual number of school days or your attendance in any given month. *Example: December has fewer school days than March, but the monthly tuition payment plan fee is the same.*

Tuition not received by Aug 16 will start to incur late fees and NLA will contact the family regarding plans to attend school. Failure to communicate with us will result in the loss of the child's reserved class placement on September 1<sup>st</sup>, and the spot given to another student on a first come, first-served basis

All tuition payments for October through May are due the first day of the month, regardless of weekends or holidays – no exceptions.

**Discounts:** NLA offers a 5% discount if the school year is paid in full by August 15. There is an automatic 5% discount for younger siblings of active students.

### **Payments and Reminders**

Noah's Little Ark will send invoices monthly via email as a reminder that tuition is due. Payments may only be given directly to the director or other NLA office staff. Please do not hand payment to classroom staff or teachers; **do not put payments in your child's bag**; do not leave payments on a desk in the office.

Checks should be made payable to *Noah's Little Ark* and include a parent name, or child's name, or invoice number on the memo line.

Cash payments may be made during school hours and an immediate receipt can be provided at your request.

Credit Card payments or ACH bank transfer payments may also be made for monthly tuition payments at your request, for a \$5 fee (this only helps a little, it does not cover the cost to NLA).

### **Fees**

Invoices will be emailed to those who have incurred late fees.

**Late Fees:** All monthly tuition payments October through May are due on the first day of the month. Tuition payments are late on the 2nd of the month – no exceptions. On the 2nd of each month, unpaid tuition is immediately subject to weekly \$10 late fees.

Family accounts more than 2 months in arrears will be cause for suspension of the child(ren) from all programs. All monies owed must be paid in full before being permitted to return to class.

**Returned Check Fee:** If a check payment is given to NLA but does not clear, the family is responsible to pay a \$50 bounced-check fee to NLA and must submit immediate payment for the tuition still due.

**Late Pick-Up Fee:** After a 5-minute grace period at pick-up, you will be charged \$1/minute for each minute until your child is signed out.

Payment for late pick-ups is due at the time of pick-up. That means that the following day a late fee of \$10 will be automatically added, and every 7 days thereafter until the charges are paid in full.

**Withdrawals:** You may withdraw from NLA programs at any time by written notice to the director. No part of tuition paid will be refunded, except in extenuating circumstance as decided by the NLA school board. **All charges, fees, and tuition that remains as an outstanding balance on your account is still due.** You have two weeks to close the account in good standing with full payment, or NLA may submit the account to a third-party collection agency. Failure to pay an outstanding balance will disqualify the family from attending NLA paid programs in the future, unless the situation is resolved, and all parties are in agreement.

**Refunds:** Tuition and fees are non-refundable. If you need to petition the NLA Board for a special circumstance, submit a request letter to the director.

**Scholarships:** A limited number of scholarships are available to families whose circumstances require assistance. An application may be requested at the time of registration or picked up in the NLA office. Completed applications will be presented to the Board for consideration at the next meeting following receipt of the form.

### **School Supplies and Attire**

**Tote bags:** Please bring the provided tote bag to school each day. Additional backpacks and bags are prohibited, except for Kindergarten student backpacks and lunch bags for Lunch Bunch students. Tote bags are sent home each day with items for the

family, such as art projects, pictures, or soiled clothes in a tied plastic bag to be replaced by a full set of clean clothes.

**Items from Home:** Personal items can be dangerous for children with allergies or weak immune systems, as cross-contamination is a serious threat. Please leave all personal toys, blankets, stuffed animals, and electronics at home. Occasionally, teachers invite the children to bring something in for a special occasion. This will always be communicated directly to guardians and adults. If you have questions, contact your child's teacher or the NLA office.

Please note that pacifiers are not allowed at school.

**Lost and Found:** There is a Lost-and-Found box in the NLA school office. We do our best to minimize mix-ups and keep the hats and mittens sorted, but the school, NLA staff, and other students will not be held responsible for personal items that are damaged, lost, or missing.

**Supply Donations:** We will provide all the supplies the children need for learning. However, we always welcome donations of paper towels, tissues, cleaning wipes, 5-ounce snack cups, and more. If you would like to donate something, talk with your child's teacher and/or the school director. Thanks!

## **Attire**

School is fun and active, and our learning experiences often mean we will get dirty! Please send your child to school wearing weather-appropriate clothes for play. Outdoor time is essential for child development, and we will be outside whenever weather permits.

Dresses and skirts are welcomed, but must be worn with shorts or leggings.

Shoes that can be well-fastened, and are closed-toe, are required. Crocs, flip-flops, and sandals are not allowed at school, as they are dangerous during gross motor activities. Students wearing unsafe



footwear will not be allowed to climb on or through the playground equipment for safety reasons and will also be discouraged from running in the gym, in the grass, or on the mulch.

Help to set your child up for success in using the bathroom by dressing them in clothing they can use independently. Pants that pull up and down easily are ideal.

Each child must bring a complete change of clothes, including socks and underwear, in a **resealable bag clearly labeled with the child's name**. The bags should be sent in with the student on the first day of school. Soiled clothing will always be sent home in a tied plastic bag, and an explanation given verbally at pick-up about what happened (snack spilled, paint, etc.)

### **Children Not Yet Toilet Trained**

If your child is not toilet trained, you must supply 5-10 diapers or pull ups, and also one container of wipes on the first day of school. You are welcome to bring creams or ointments as well, as long as they are not prescription strength. Please label each bag, container, and bottle with your child's name. When supplies run low, the NLA staff will let you know it is time to send in more supplies.

The NLA staff of the younger classrooms work very diligently to support and reinforce toilet training during the two and half hours of school. With such a short time and a whole class of students, toilet training and diaper changes can take up a very large chunk of class time; even so, this is time carefully used to interact with each child, encouraging their progress and helping them to learn and continue to practice good hygiene and self-care. Please take the time to communicate with the classroom teacher any helpful information about your child's progress or struggles not only at the beginning of school, but also throughout the year.

### **FOOD: Snacks, Lunch, and Special Treats**

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**Allergy Note:** Noah's Little Ark is an allergy-conscious school. All allergies should be communicated so we can be careful.

**Nut-Free Facility:** In addition to keeping all peanuts, peanut butter, and other nuts out of our classrooms and hallways, please do not ever send anything that has been made in a facility that processes

nuts. For the same reason, please **do not send in anything that is homemade**. Accidental contamination can create a life-threatening situation for someone with an allergy.

## **Snacks**

Families will be invited to provide snack for the class several times throughout the school year. This is a great opportunity for you and your child to work together to pick a nutritious snack for classmates to enjoy. It allows you to bring the learning experience home as you discuss all-the-time (healthy) foods and special treats. If this creates a financial burden for your family, please contact the director, and we can make appropriate arrangements.

## **Snack Suggestions**

A few options are listed here, but there are many other ideas your child may have! Check with the classroom teacher if you are unsure. Always double check to be sure the ingredient list does not include nuts and was not prepared in a facility that also processes nuts.

Special sweets can be cookies, donuts, or cupcakes from a nut-free facility, ice cream sandwiches, or a tub of ice cream to scoop.

You are always welcome to wash and prepare fresh fruits or vegetables such as: broccoli florets, carrot sticks, tiny tomatoes, apples, grapes, and berries. You can also include store-bought dips to go with them if you like.

Mix-and-match or pair these with something from above: pretzels, cheese crackers, animal crackers, whole-grain crackers, cheese cubes, string cheese, ice pops, chocolate milk, yogurt sticks.

## **Lunch**

All children 4yrs old and up (AND fully potty trained) are invited to lunch bunch from 11:30-12:30. Parents provide packed lunch, and children build independence, self-help skills, and socialize with peers.

A few tips when packing lunch:

- No items processed in facilities that also process nuts
- Refrigeration and a microwave are available
- Prepare food in smaller slices or chunks easily managed
- No glass containers are permitted
- Include all utensils and drinks (water is preferred)

### Lunch Ideas:

- Jelly or cheese sandwiches
- homemade cracker sandwiches
- lettuce wraps
- mini pizzas
- washed & prepped fruits:
  - grapes
  - strawberries
  - apple slices
  - dried fruit
  - banana
  - berries
- cheese cubes
- string cheese
- hardboiled egg
- cold meat cubes
- cold pasta salad
- yogurt
- washed & prepped veggies:
  - carrot sticks
  - cucumber slices
  - cut green beans
  - broccoli
  - hummus dip
  - cherry tomatoes

## **Birthdays**

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Birthdays are huge events in the life of a child, and we love celebrating with them! Each child will have a day to celebrate their birthday at school. When the birthday falls on a school day, if possible, we'll celebrate then. If not, we will pick a Pretend Birthday.

**Birthday Invitations:** Want to have a birthday party outside of school and want to distribute birthday invitations at school? You absolutely can, but please do invite every student in your child's class.

## **Treats**

Children will be invited to bring a special treat to share with their class for their birthday celebration day at school. This may be a non-food

treat, a classroom snack, or a send-home individually wrapped treat.

**Non-food Treats:** Many non-food treats can be used to celebrate birthdays. You may wish to give each classmate a page of stickers, a fancy pencil, or a special homemade card/picture. You may donate a new book to the class library, a bucket of sidewalk chalk, an age-appropriate table game for the classroom, or even supplies for a class project (many ways to coordinate with the class teacher!)

**Food treats and snacks:** If you elect to bring in food to share, purchase a treat that is professionally made and packaged in a professionally certified kitchen or factory, to prevent cross contamination. Remember to be sure to read the label first and verify that the treat was not processed in a facility that also processes nuts.

### **Safety and Security**

**Building Access:** School entrances are locked while school is in session. If you need to access the building during school hours, please go to the Franklin Street entrance and ring the bell.

**Note that our primary focus during the school day is on the children, so it may take us a few moments to answer the door.**

**Volunteers:** Noah's Little Ark follows legal requirements and UMC Safe Sanctuary guidelines for volunteering with children. If you are interested in volunteering at NLA, contact the director. You will need to obtain a free Volunteer Clearance and provide a copy to the office. If you are unsure about this process or have questions, stop by the NLA office and we will be happy to assist you.

**Emergency Situations:** NLA has a comprehensive plan in place for evacuations, weather emergencies, breaches of security, etc. We review and revise the plan regularly both internally and with professionals to promote top quality care for your child. Fire Drills take place several times during the school year, according to state guidelines.

## **Pastoral Care & Church Events**

The First United Methodist Church of Palmyra pastor is available for pastoral concerns or just to sit and chat over a cup of coffee. He can be reached via email: [pastorjim@palmyrafirst.org](mailto:pastorjim@palmyrafirst.org)

First United Methodist Church of Palmyra welcomes all families into the church on Sundays and to all our church events during the week. Check out our [website](#) for details.

Every Sunday morning, band-led music worship starts at 9am and organ/piano hymn music worship begins at 10:30am.